



January 12, 2023

Honorable Chair Rick Ladd
House Education Committee
State House Representative's Hall
107 North Main St., Concord, NH 03301

RE: NAMI NH Support for HB 61

Dear Chair and Committee Members:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. My name is Holly Stevens, and I am the Director of Public Policy at NAMI NH, the National Alliance on Mental Illness. NAMI NH is a non-profit, grassroots organization whose mission is to improve the lives of all people impacted by mental illness and suicide through support, education and advocacy. On behalf of NAMI NH, I am here today to speak in favor of HB 61, relative to teaching on discrimination in the public schools and discrimination in public workplaces.

Mental illness and suicide is one of the greatest public health issues facing students and young professionals in the state of New Hampshire. According to the US Center for Disease Control, suicide is the second leading cause of death of New Hampshire citizens ages 10-34.

Nationally, the link between discrimination and suicide is clear. Lesbian, gay, and bisexual youth report suicide attempts at a rate 3.5 times higher than their heterosexual peers. Similarly, female and black non-Hispanic high school students are among the highest prevalence groups for suicide attempts. Existing and ongoing research has consistently shown that discrimination based on sexuality, gender identity, race, and disability has a significant impact on suicidal ideation and attempts, especially for students at the intersections of these identities.

Schools and workplaces are distinct and important communities within our larger society. For most, the interactions we have in these communities are the most defining of our daily lives. We have a responsibility to ensure that every student and employee in the

Reflecting on 40 Years: Continuing Our Journey to Hope, Help, and Health

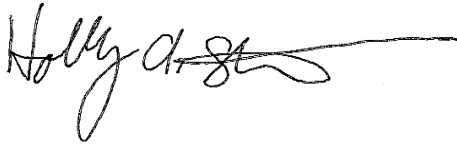
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state of New Hampshire is safe from discrimination. This bill, which would repeal RSA 354-A:29 through 354-A:34, and protect the right of schools and workplaces to teach on all subject matter, will reduce harm to large and important sections of our communities, and has the potential to save lives that discrimination may otherwise take.

For these reasons, NAMI NH urges the committee vote to recommend ought to pass for HB 61.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Holly A. Stevens", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Holly A. Stevens, Esq.