



NAMI | New Hampshire

National Alliance on Mental Illness

January 12, 2023

Honorable Chair Sharon Carson
Senate Judiciary
State House Room 100
107 North Main Street, Concord, NH 03301

RE: NAMI NH Support of SB 1

Honorable Chair Carson 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 New Hampshire, 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 support of SB 1, relative to the Sununu youth Services Center.

Under current New Hampshire law, the Sununu Youth Services Center (SYSC) is scheduled to close in March of 2023, with no plan for a new center. Without legislative action, the youth being served in the SYSC at the time of the scheduled closure would need to be sent to out of state facilities. It is inappropriate for our state to allow for this to happen, and NAMI NH applauds the efforts of the Senate to get legislation passed with plans for a new facility in advance of the March 2023 deadline.

Many children enter the juvenile justice system inappropriately as a result of unmet mental health needs. The majority of children in the juvenile justice system have a diagnosable mental health disorder. Therefore, NAMI NH strongly supports having a new facility that compliments trauma informed care of youth and that provides services to meet the mental health needs of all children served in the center. NAMI NH further supports the plans contained in SB 1 to have staff trained in working with youth with behavioral health challenges and trauma histories; to use evidence-based practices in the treatment of the youth; to have frequent visitation opportunities with family; and to have educational programing and staffing that meets the individualized educational needs of the youth, including special education needs. NAMI NH also supports the plan to implement the programing upon the effective date of SB 1 rather than waiting until the new facility has been built.

For all of the above stated reasons, NAMI NH urges the committee to recommend ought to pass on SB 1. I am available to answer any questions the committee may have.

Sincerely,

Holly A. Stevens, Esq.

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

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