



February 1, 2023

Honorable Chairman Wayne MacDonald  
House Health and Human Services and Elderly Affairs Committee  
Legislate Office Building Room 205  
North Main St., Concord, NH 03301

RE: NAMI NH Support of HB 565

Dear Chairman MacDonald 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 HB 565, relative to expanding Medicaid to include certain postpartum health care services.

The United States is the only industrialized nation with a maternal mortality rate that is on the rise, increasing 26 percent between 2000 and 2014. An increasing number of maternal deaths, defined as deaths during pregnancy and up to 365 days after, are occurring in the postpartum period. Data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention show that about one-third of all pregnancy-related deaths happen one week to one year after a pregnancy ends.<sup>1</sup> According to the NH 2021 Annual Report on Maternal Mortality, half of the state's maternal deaths occurred six to twelve months postpartum. With a growing number of maternal deaths occurring in the postpartum period, keeping women covered through Medicaid is critically important. Research concludes that extending coverage improves health outcomes. Specifically, postpartum women who have continued coverage through Medicaid experience 1.6 fewer maternal deaths per 100,000.<sup>2</sup> It is critical that during this time all moms have insurance coverage for any necessary physical and mental health treatment, including low-income moms who are on Medicaid during their pregnancy.

One of the most prevalent illnesses facing postpartum moms is depression. According to America's Health Rankings, 11.2 percent of New Hampshire women with a recent live birth reported experiencing depressive symptoms. In 2020, nearly one-quarter of all births in New Hampshire were billed to Medicaid. Therefore, many women in New Hampshire would benefit greatly if Medicaid coverage was extended through the first-year post birth.

The children of women who experience postpartum depression are also affected. Research has demonstrated an association between postpartum depression and delayed cognitive and language development, disorganized or insecure attachment, higher rates of behavioral problems, and

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<sup>1</sup> "It's Past Time To Provide Continuous Medicaid Coverage For One Year Postpartum", Health Affairs Blog, February 6, 2020.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

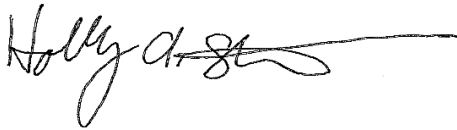
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lower grades. There is also a documented link between postpartum depression and higher rates of depression in children during the latter teen years.<sup>3</sup>

Since both post-partum women and their children would benefit from continuing Medicaid coverage through the first year after birth, NAMI NH urges the committee recommend ought to pass for HB 565.

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.

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<sup>3</sup> Association of persistent and severe postnatal depression with child outcomes. *JAMA Psychiatry*. 2018;75(3):247-253.

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