



February 8, 2023

Honorable Chair Terry Roy
House Criminal Justice and Public Safety Committee
Legislative Office Building 204
North State St., Concord, NH 03301

RE: NAMI NH Support for HB 106

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 106, relative to extreme risk protection orders.

The United States Surgeon General has identified that suicide is a major public health issue in the US, and one that is largely preventable. However, we have done little as a state or a society to prevent suicide. The impact of a single death is profound and ripples out to the family, friends, schools, workplaces, first responders and beyond. In addition to the human impact, it also has a significant economic impact with the estimates of the cost of each suicide death being \$1.3 million dollars – predominantly in lost wages. Overall economic impact of suicide deaths and attempts in the US was estimated at \$93.4 billion in 2016.

It is important to note that 90% of people who survive a suicide attempt do not go on to die by suicide. Unlike most other means of suicide, use of a firearm in a suicide attempt is almost always lethal and leaves little opportunity for intervention. While people may contemplate suicide for a long period of time, when they make the decision to end their life, there is often very little time elapsed between that point and them making an attempt. Toward that end, temporarily restricting access to lethal means – in this case firearms, is

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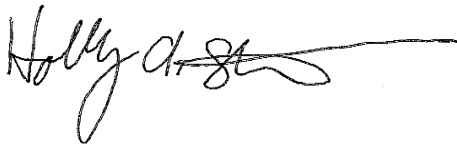
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an important suicide prevention strategy and one that is recommended in the National Strategy For Suicide Prevention.

In a report released by the US Center for disease control in June of 2018 looking at suicide rates across the US, New Hampshire was identified as having the third highest increase in suicide rates compared to other states. As indicated by the accompanying chart, in New Hampshire suicide is the second leading cause of death ages 15-34, third leading cause ages 35-44 and fourth leading cause of death ages 45-54. From 2015-2020, firearms were used in 49% of suicide deaths in New Hampshire. During that same period, of all firearm deaths, suicide accounted for 89%.

Simply put, temporarily restricting access to firearms when an individual poses a significant risk of causing harm to himself or herself or others is a commonsense measure to assist in addressing the major public health issue of suicide in New Hampshire. Therefore, NAMI NH urges the committee vote to recommend ought to pass for HB 106.

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.