



February 7th, 2023

Honorable Chairman Rick Ladd
House Education Committee
Legislative Office Building 205-207
33 N State St., Concord, NH 03301

RE: NAMI NH Support for HB 505

Dear Chairman and Committee Members:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. My name is Sam Hawkins, and I am the Public Policy Assistant 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 support of HB 505, relative to comprehensive mental health education in schools.

It's no secret that we are amid a youth mental health crisis, both locally and nationally. Last year, the American Psychological Association, the American Academy of Pediatrics, and the US Surgeon General all declared that our youth are facing a mental health emergency. In New Hampshire there are increased numbers of youth boarding in emergency departments awaiting an inpatient bed while experiencing a mental health crisis. There are increased numbers of youth seeking assistance from community-based mental health providers and finding themselves facing months' long waits for initial appointments. Youth are reporting greater instances of anxiety, depression, and thoughts of self-harm. Suicide is the second leading cause of death for Granite State youth and young adults ages 10 – 34. One in six US youth ages 6-17 experience a mental health disorder each year, and 15,000 Granite Staters ages 12-17 have depression.

Despite mental health education being required by administrative rule (Ed. 306.40(b)(2)(g)), NAMI NH has heard from several students who indicate they have had zero mental health education within the health education program in their schools. By codifying these requirements, HB 505 would ensure that every school provide this critical

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education and reduce the stigma surrounding mental health by recognizing, acknowledging, and validating mental health symptoms and illnesses.

We need all hands on deck, including the state's schools. By requiring mental health education in statute, this bill is one tool that can be used to help address the youth mental health crisis New Hampshire is experiencing. Therefore, NAMI NH urges the committee to vote ought to pass on HB 505.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Samuel C. Hawkins". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'S' and a long, sweeping underline.

Samuel C. Hawkins