



February 15, 2023

Honorable Chair Regina Birdsell  
Senate Health and Human Services Committee  
Legislative Office Building Room 101  
North Main St., Concord, NH 03301

RE: NAMI NH Support of SB 235

Dear Chair Birdsell 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 235 relative to services provided through a primary care behavioral health model.

It's no secret that New Hampshire is amid a mental health crisis. This crisis has been exacerbated by the pandemic. Local and national data indicate during the past two years there have been significant increases in stress, anxiety and depression across all ages, though particularly impacting one of our most vulnerable populations, children and youth. The most visible symptom of this is emergency department boarding of individuals in a mental health crisis while waiting for an inpatient bed. In addition to lengthy waits for inpatient beds, Granite Staters are waiting months for an initial outpatient mental health appointment.

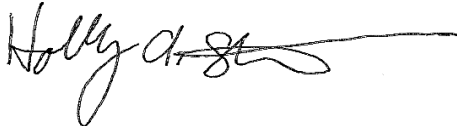
New Hampshire is also amid a workforce shortage. Mental health providers have months long wait lists. Due to these waitlists, people needing mental health treatment have difficulty accessing services. Being able to access services through a primary care provider will help address the workforce shortage. Allowing primary care providers to bill for consultation services with psychologists will likely increase the number of primary care providers willing to take on more complex mental health issues.

*Find Help, Find Hope.*

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SB 235 prohibits an insurer that provides mental health and substance use disorder benefits from denying coverage on the sole basis that services are delivered through a primary care behavioral health model. As such, it will encourage more primary care providers to develop these models within their practices. Since, as stated previously, this will address the mental health workforce issue, and hence increase access to treatment, NAMI NH encourages the committee to vote SB 235 ought to pass.

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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