



February 15, 2023

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

RE: NAMI NH Support of SB 238

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 238 relative to the use of telemedicine to treat mental health conditions.

It's no secret that New Hampshire is amid a mental health crisis, exacerbated further 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 crisis is the amount of individuals in a mental health crisis boarding in emergency departments while awaiting an inpatient bed. Even beyond inpatient services, Granite Staters are waiting months for initial outpatient mental health appointments.

Contributing to the months long wait lists is New Hampshire's workforce shortage. Mental health providers can't meet our level of need through our current channels. Telemedicine is a crucial tool to be used in addressing the workforce shortage and increasing access to mental health services, especially in rural areas of the state.

During the pandemic, the Governor issued several emergency orders, one of which expanded telemedicine. This emergency order allowed providers to provide all medically necessary services remotely. When telemedicine was passed into law, it

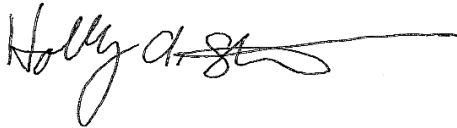
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contained restrictions on the prescription of certain medications. SB 238 would codify a more expansive prescribing law for mental health conditions.

Mental health conditions are well suited to telemedicine. Many people with mental health issues prefer telemedicine to in-person visits. Through supporting the mental health workforce, SB 238 would go far in addressing the mental health crisis in our state by increasing access to psychiatric providers.. Therefore, NAMI NH urges the committee to vote SB 238 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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