



February 1, 2023

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

RE: NAMI NH Support for SB 86

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 favor of SB 86, relative to health care workforce development and making appropriations therefor.

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. This is a practice NAMI NH has long described as wrong medically, legally, ethically, morally, and economically.

In addition to lengthy waits for inpatient beds, Granite Staters are waiting months for an initial outpatient mental health appointment. NAMI NH has heard from individuals that due to the low Medicaid reimbursement rates, certain providers have had to cap the number of Medicaid patients served in order to maintain a healthy mix of commercially insured versus Medicaid covered individuals. This creates an equity issue as people covered by Medicaid must wait longer for services than their commercially insured counterparts.

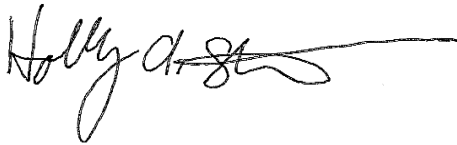
Raising Medicaid reimbursement rates would go far in addressing our state's current workforce shortage issue. If Medicaid rates were increased, mental health providers

*Find Help, Find Hope.*

NAMI New Hampshire • 85 North State Street • Concord, NH 03301  
InfoLine: 800-242-6264 • Tel. 603-225-5359 • Fax 603-228-8848 • [info@naminh.org](mailto:info@naminh.org) / [www.NAMINH.org](http://www.NAMINH.org)

could hire additional staff and pay them competitive wages. This would not only incentivize clinicians to practice in our state but would assist mental health providers in recruiting from other states. Raising rates would also allow providers who limit the number of Medicaid patients they serve to lift this barrier, allowing for equitable access to treatment regardless of payment source. Therefore, NAMI NH urges the committee to recommend SB 86 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.

*Find Help, Find Hope.*