



February 1st, 2023

Honorable Chair Wayne MacDonald
House Health, Human Services and Elderly Affairs Committee
Legislative Office Building 210-211
33 N State St., Concord, NH 03301

RE: NAMI NH Support for HB 264

Dear Chair 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 264, relative to amendments and corrections for birth records.

There is an emerging body of research that shows that LGBTQ individuals, especially those who are transgender or gender-nonconforming, are at an elevated risk for experiencing anxiety and depression and are more likely to consider and attempt suicide than their heterosexual or cisgender peers. According to the Trevor Project, in 2022, 39% of LGBTQ youth (ages 13-24) in New Hampshire seriously considered suicide, and 10% attempted it. Beyond New Hampshire, a 2020 study in the *Journal of Interpersonal Violence (JIV)* found that 82% of transgender individuals across the US and Canada have considered suicide, and 40% have attempted it.

Hormone therapy and gender affirming surgery alone can significantly decrease the likelihood of psychological distress, but, in addition, trans mental health must be addressed socially within our communities. The JIV study found that school belonging, internalized stigma, and emotional familial neglect made a significant contribution to suicidality for transgender individuals. Based on this data, we believe that access to identity-affirming spaces is one of the most significant ways we can promote trans wellbeing.

“Open representation” and “a welcoming environment” have been identified as qualities that make a space affirming for LGBTQ youth. Yet in NH, these spaces are few and far between, as evidenced by the fact that only 18% of LGBTQ youth believe their community to be “very accepting.”

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 / www.NAMINH.org

By allowing for amendments to birth records, this bill would take an important step in making New Hampshire at large a supportive environment for transgender individuals, enabling them to obtain an affirmative, legal recognition of their identity from the state. We believe that this and similar efforts will help to improve the mental wellbeing of transgender individuals and decrease the prevalence of anxiety, depression, and suicide within that community.

For these reasons, NAMI NH urges the committee to vote Ought to Pass for HB 264.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Samuel C. Hawkins". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned below the word "Sincerely,".

Samuel C. Hawkins