

February 1st, 2023

Honorable Chair Terry Roy
House Criminal Justice and Public Safety Committee
Legislative Office Building 202-204
33 N State St., Concord, NH 03301

RE: NAMI NH Support for HB 315

Dear Chair and Committee Members:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. 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 writing today to speak in support of HB 315, prohibiting provocations based on a victim's actual or perceived gender, gender identity, gender expression, or sexual orientation from being used as a defense in a criminal case.

Sexual and gender minorities are almost three times as likely to be the victim of a violent crime¹. Though research into this topic is limited, largely due to accessibility of data and possible underreporting, even the CDC has acknowledged the prevalence and impact of violence on LGBTQ health. Specifically focusing on youth, the CDC reports that lesbian, gay, and bisexual youth are 140% more likely to skip at least one day of school a month out of fear for their safety, and that 10% of these students were threatened or injured with a weapon at school alone².

Violence, whether threatened or performed, has a significant impact on an individual's mental health. We believe this impact to be especially great if one does not feel that their safety is properly protected. A 2016 study for *LGBT Health* concluded that there is a link between sexual minority youth's elevated risk of suicidality and their experience with violence and identity-specific harassment³.

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LGBTQ+ individuals deserve to feel and be safe from harm within their communities. This bill would take an important step in providing these individuals with a sense of security and peace of mind in their communities, improving mental wellness.

For these reasons, NAMI NH urges the committee to vote Ought to Pass for HB 315.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Samuel C. Hawkins".

Samuel C. Hawkins

¹*Victimization rates and traits of sexual and gender minorities in the United States: Results from the National Crime Victimization Survey, 2017*, ScienceAdvances (2020), https://www.science.org/doi/10.1126/sciadv.aba6910?fbclid=IwAR01oLZW1XfpYIZlif_XRxOTzgBjmddp6ML9zTl6URfqFYCw6vL88CwguHc

²*LGBT Youth*, CDC, <https://www.cdc.gov/lgbthealth/youth.htm>

³*Effects of Victimization and Violence on Suicidal Ideation and Behaviors Among Sexual Minority and Heterosexual Adolescents*, LGBT Health (2016), <https://doi.org/10.1089/lgbt.2015.0037>