

March 7, 2023

Honorable Chairman Wayne MacDonald  
House Health, Human Services and Elderly Affairs Committee  
Legislative Office Building Room 205  
33 N State St., Concord, NH 03301

RE: NAMI NH Support for HB 368

Dear Chairman MacDonald 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 368, relative to protections related to receiving gender-affirming health care or gender-affirming mental health care.

In the United States and Canada, 82% of transgender individuals have considered suicide, and 40% have attempted it.<sup>1</sup> The disproportionate risk of depression and suicide that our transgender and nonbinary community members face is a matter of great urgency with a clear solution: access to care. Multiple studies show that gender-affirming medical treatment is significantly associated with lowered odds of depression and suicide attempts for transgender and nonbinary youth.<sup>2,3</sup> Not only is the availability of this care a necessity, but, in light of legislative attacks both locally and across the nation, gender-affirming care must be made safe and protected for the individuals and families that pursue it.

In 2021, the American Medical Association firmly stated their opposition to the rise of governmental overreach into medical care for transgender and nonbinary individuals. Michael Suk, MD, JD, and board member for the AMA, is quoted as saying, “Gender-affirming care is medically-necessary, evidence-based care that improves the physical and

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<sup>1</sup> *Suicidality Among Transgender Youth: Elucidating the Role of Interpersonal Risk Factors*, Journal of Interpersonal Violence (2020)

<sup>2</sup> *Association of Gender-Affirming Hormone Therapy With Depression, Thoughts of Suicide, and Attempted Suicide Among Transgender and Nonbinary Youth*, Journal of Adolescent Health (2021)

<sup>3</sup> *Mental Health Outcomes in Transgender and Nonbinary Youths Receiving Gender-Affirming Care*, JAMA Network Open (2022)

mental health of transgender and gender-diverse people,” and that the organization “opposes the dangerous intrusion of government into the practice of medicine and the criminalization of health care decision-making.”<sup>4</sup>

Gender-affirming care is life-saving care, and we must dedicate ourselves to providing whatever protections are necessary for its continued practice. The safeguards present in HB 368 help accomplish this goal and would allow individuals and families to feel safe pursuing this critical care in the Granite State. Additionally, this bill would go far in establishing New Hampshire as a welcoming and affirming environment for all transgender and nonbinary people and their families, supportive of their physical and mental wellbeing. For these reasons, NAMI NH urges the committee to vote Ought to Pass for HB 368.

Sincerely,

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

Samuel C. Hawkins

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<sup>4</sup>*AMA reinforces opposition to restrictions on transgender medical care, American Medical Association (2021)*

*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)