



March 7, 2023

Honorable Chairman Mark Pearson
House Children and Family Law Committee
Legislate Office Building Room 206
North Main St., Concord, NH 03301

RE: NAMI NH Opposition to HB 417

Dear Chairman Pearson 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 opposition to HB 417, relative to the definition of child abuse.

Specifically, I am here to talk about the high risk for depression, suicide attempts and suicide death for trans people. By way of background, NAMI NH's Connect Suicide Prevention Program has been designated as a National Best Practice in suicide prevention, intervention and postvention and has trained in over 40 states, and 35 tribal nations. The Connect program has also done briefings related to mental health and suicide prevention at the Pentagon, provided training for the Department of Defense (DOD) and presented in six countries. NAMI NH/Connect staff serve on numerous national and local workgroups and committees, including the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline (NSPL), as well as New Hampshire's legislatively established Suicide Prevention Council.

As the attached chart indicates, suicide is the second leading cause of death for ages 10-24 in NH. These suicide deaths, however, are only the tip of the iceberg considering suicidal ideation and attempts, of which the human and economic impact is significant.

There is an emerging body of research showing that trans and nonbinary people are likely to consider and attempt suicide at alarmingly higher rates than their cisgender peers. In addressing this issue, a 2021 study indicated that people who undergo hormone therapy or gender affirming surgery experience significant reductions in psychological distress, including suicidal thoughts.

Previous studies on suicide rates of transgender people showed several unique risk factors that contribute to the high rate of suicide in this population. These factors include, lack of family and social supports, gender-based discrimination, transgender-based abuse and violence, gender dysphoria and body-related shame, difficulty while undergoing gender reassignment, and being a member of another or multiple minority groups.

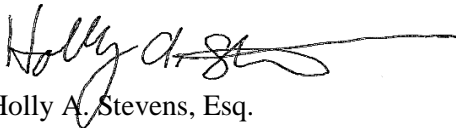
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Adding hormone therapy and gender affirming surgery to the definition of child abuse takes away a parent's right to support their child as they see fit. As stated above, a lack of family supports contributes to increased risk of suicide in the young transgender population. If passed, HB 417 would be harmful to the mental health of these individuals and, as indicated in the previously mentioned studies, is likely to increase risk for depression, suicide, and suicide attempts.

NAMI NH is committed to addressing suicide as a public health issue and reducing the incidence of suicide thoughts, attempts and deaths for all people in NH. We respectfully request that you vote this bill inexpedient to legislate. I am happy to answer any questions which you have.

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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