

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 Opposition for HB 619

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 opposition to HB 619, prohibiting gender transition procedures for minors, relative to sex and gender in public schools, and relative to the definition of conversion therapy.

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. In 2022, 39% of LGBTQ youth in New Hampshire seriously considered suicide, and 10% attempted it.¹ Beyond New Hampshire, 82% of transgender individuals across the US and Canada have considered suicide, and 40% have attempted it.²

This is a startling crisis that must be urgently addressed. We must also be clear, however, that these increased rates of mental health symptoms are not inextricably linked with one's gender identity or sexual orientation. Rather, as stated by the president of the American Medical Association, it is "the result of stigma, discrimination and mistreatment... with support at home, school, and in the community-and with access to gender affirming care-transgender youth do as well on mental health measures as their non-transgender peers."³

¹2022 National Survey on LGBTQ Mental Health by State, The Trevor Project (2022)

²Suicidality Among Transgender Youth: Elucidating the Role of Interpersonal Risk Factors, Journal of Interpersonal Violence (2020)

³Everyone deserves quality medical care delivered without bias, American Medical Association (2022)

Access to gender-affirming medical care is crucial to improve mental health outcomes for transgender and nonbinary youth. Multiple studies show that gender-affirming treatment, including puberty blockers and hormone treatment, has a significant association with lowered odds of depression and suicide attempts.^{4,5}

In addition to medical treatment, the impact of an accepting community is paramount. Lack of school belonging, internalized stigma, and emotional familial neglect contribute significantly to suicidality for transgender individuals.² Consistent with this data, providing access to identity-affirming spaces is one of the most significant ways to promote trans wellbeing. Yet in NH, only 18% of LGBTQ youth believe their community at large to be “very accepting.”¹

Finally, NAMI NH remains firmly opposed to the damaging practice of conversion therapy and believes that its prohibition in law must remain strict. Last year during testimony on a similar bill, we heard repeatedly that conversion therapy does not happen in NH. However, recent data from the Trevor Project revealed that in 2022, in New Hampshire, 9% of LGBTQ youth surveyed reported being threatened with conversion therapy, and 4% reported being subjected to it.¹

HB 619 seeks to damage the livelihood of transgender and nonbinary youth by restricting their access to life-saving care, forcing them to live as an inauthentic self in schools, and potentially exposing them to dangerous conversion therapies. If put into law, this bill will harm transgender and nonbinary youth and put lives at risk. In standing committed to the livelihood and wellbeing of all Granite Staters, NAMI NH strongly urges the committee to vote Inexpedient to Legislate for HB 619.

Sincerely,



Samuel C. Hawkins / shawkins@naminh.org

¹2022 National Survey on LGBTQ Mental Health by State, The Trevor Project (2022)

²Suicidality Among Transgender Youth: Elucidating the Role of Interpersonal Risk Factors, Journal of Interpersonal Violence (2020)

⁴Association of Gender-Affirming Hormone Therapy With Depression, Thoughts of Suicide, and Attempted Suicide Among Transgender and Nonbinary Youth, Journal of Adolescent Health (2021)

⁵Mental Health Outcomes in Transgender and Nonbinary Youths Receiving Gender-Affirming Care, JAMA Network Open (2022)

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