

March 21, 2023

Honorable Chair Ruth Ward
Senate Education Committee
Legislate Office Building Room 101
33 North Main St., Concord, NH 03301

RE: NAMI NH Support for HB 35

Dear Chair Ward 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 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 favor of HB 35, requiring student identification cards to include the National Eating Disorders Hotline.

A 2020 study by the Strategic Training Initiative for the Prevention of Eating Disorders (STRIPED) found that approximately 11% of those living in the United States have an eating disorder, representing 14.4 million females and 6.6 million males. In New Hampshire, nine percent of the population (119,406 people) will have an eating disorder during their lifetime. Though eating disorders have been found to impact anyone ages 5-80, the highest prevalence of cases for both groups was found between the ages of 20-29.

Nationally, eating disorders result in 10,200 deaths per year, and are among the highest case fatality rates of any mental illnesses. Approximately 26% of those who are diagnosed with Anorexia Nervosa (AN) attempt suicide.¹ In addition to death by suicide, even more individuals who have AN die because of medical complications due to the illness. Students and adolescents are among the greatest impacted by this increased likelihood of mortality. Fifty-three percent of adolescents with Bulimia Nervosa and 34%

¹ National Association of Anorexia Nervosa and Associated Disorders (ANAD) website, <https://anad.org/eating-disorders-statistics/>

Find Help, Find Hope.

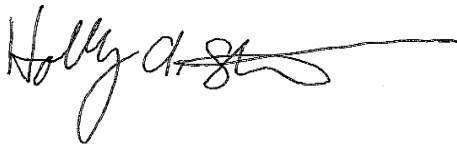
NAMI New Hampshire • 85 North State Street • Concord, NH 03301
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with Binge Eating Disorder also experience suicidal ideation, and students with severe ED symptoms are eleven times more likely to attempt suicide.

In New Hampshire, in addition to the human cost, eating disorders have a yearly economic cost of \$268.3 million, putting an undue and preventable burden on every facet of our local society. Eating disorder treatment is very limited in our state, many times forcing families to seek treatment out of state for this serious illness. This bill will reduce harm and save lives by placing a valuable resource at students' fingertips, thus connecting our most vulnerable population with support and resources for these highly fatal illnesses.

For these reasons, NAMI NH urges the committee vote to recommend ought to pass for HB 35.

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.