



January 31, 2023

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

RE: NAMI NH Support for SB 151

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 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 favor of SB 151, relative to mental health education.

It's no secret that New Hampshire is in the midst of a mental health crisis including New Hampshire's youth. Last Year, the American Psychological Association, the American Academy of Pediatrics, and the US Surgeon General all declared that our youth are facing a mental health emergency. In New Hampshire there are increased numbers of youth boarding in emergency departments awaiting an inpatient bed while experiencing a mental health crisis. There are increased numbers of youth seeking assistance from community-based mental health providers and finding themselves facing months' long waits for initial appointments. There are increased numbers of youth reporting anxiety, depression, and thoughts of self-harm. Suicide is the second leading cause of death for Granite State youth and young adults ages 10 – 34. One in six US youth ages 6-17 experience a mental health disorder each year, and 15,000 Granite Staters ages 12-17 have depression.

Despite mental health education being required by administrative rule (Ed. 306.40(b)(2)(g)), NAMI NH has heard from several students who indicate they have had zero mental health education within the health education program in their schools. By codifying these requirements, SB 151 would assure that every school would provide this critical education. To address the mental health crisis, we need all hands on deck, including the state's schools. In addition to recognizing,

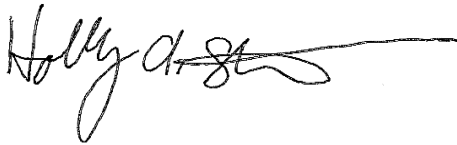
*Find Help, Find Hope.*

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acknowledging, and validating mental health symptoms and illnesses, SB 151 would go far in reducing stigma around mental health by normalizing it.

By requiring mental health education in statute, SB 151 is one tool that can be used to help address the youth mental health crisis New Hampshire is experiencing. Therefore, NAMI NH urges the committee vote ought to pass on SB 151.

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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