



February 7, 2023

Honorable Chair Sharon Carson
Senate Judiciary Committee
State House Room 100
North Main St., Concord, NH 03301

RE: NAMI NH Support of SB 184

Dear Chair Carson 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 support of SB 184, relative to the age at which a minor may receive mental health treatment without parental consent.

Over the past decade, already-high suicide rates have been rising in the United States and New Hampshire. Attached to this testimony is a chart from the National Center for Injury Prevention and control at the CDC detailing the leading causes of death in New Hampshire. It shows that the second leading cause of death for 10–24-year-old individuals is suicide.

Additionally, according to Health Affairs, between 2007 and 2018, suicide increased 57.4 percent in 10–24-year-olds. In one survey of high school students, one in three youth reported persistent feelings of sadness or hopelessness and one in five had seriously considered suicide.¹ More precisely, results from the 2019 Youth Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System show that 18.8% of high school students seriously considered attempting suicide and 8.9% attempted suicide.

The rates of mental health symptoms, suicidal thoughts and attempts is even more elevated in the LGBTQ population. According to the Trevor Project, in 2022, 72 % of LGBTQ youth in NH reported experiencing symptoms of anxiety, 55% reported experiencing symptoms of depression, 39% seriously considered suicide, and 10%

¹ "Understanding Suicide Risk And Prevention," Health Affairs Health Policy Brief, January 29, 2021.

Find Help, Find Hope.

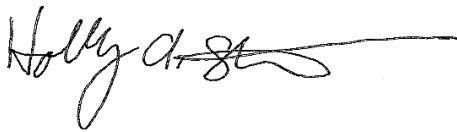
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attempted it. Within that population, 52% wanted mental health care but were not able to receive it. Of those who were not able to receive treatment, 37% reported that this was due to not wanting to have to get parent's or caregiver's permission.

Also of note, in NAMI NH's experience, counselors and therapists who are proficient in their practice, will involve the family, including parents and guardians, in the treatment of an adolescent patient when it is in the best interest of the child.

New Hampshire needs to look at new and innovative ways to address the youth mental health crisis. Allowing youth 16 and older to receive mental health treatment without parental consent is one tool that would go far in addressing this. Therefore, NAMI NH urges the committee to recommend ought to pass on SB 184. I am available to answer any questions you may 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.

Find Help, Find Hope.

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