



February 21, 2023

Honorable Chair Regina Birdsell
Senate Health and Human Services Committee
Legislate Office Building Room 101
North Main St., Concord, NH 03301

RE: NAMI NH Opposition to SB 253

Dear Chairman 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 of SB 253, relative to parental access to a minor child's medical records.

NAMI New Hampshire strongly believes in the system of care that has been set up to address children's mental health needs in our state. We also recognize the importance of the role of the family within that system. However, in looking at the adverse childhood experience statistics in our state, it is evident that there are many cases where children could greatly benefit from a private therapeutic relationship with a therapist. Those already vulnerable children would be even more vulnerable if this bill were to pass. Many adverse childhood experiences happen at the hands of a parent or guardian.

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. SB 253 does not do enough to protect children whose therapist believes that releasing the information would be harmful to or endanger the child.

House Bill 406 is similar to SB 253 in that it is relative to parental access to children's medical records. However, it has several protections that are not included in SB 253; specifically, the protections included in lines 9 and 10 of HB 406. Attached is the written testimony that NAMI NH submitted regarding HB 406. As laid out in the testimony, we are encouraging an amendment that would change "and" on line 9 to an "or," but go on further to state if this change is made that NAMI NH would not oppose HB 406. NAMI NH encourages this committee to consider amending SB 253 to include the current protective language of HB 406 with the suggested amendment above.

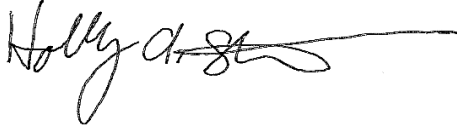
Reflecting on 40 Years: Continuing Our Journey to Hope, Help, and Health

NAMI New Hampshire • 85 North State Street • Concord, NH 03301

InfoLine: 800-242-6264 • Tel. 603-225-5359 • Fax 603-228-8848 • info@naminh.org / www.NAMINH.org

Currently, the youth in NH are experiencing a mental health crisis, and need access to all services available, including private therapy sessions. Therefore, NAMI NH urges the committee to vote inexpedient to legislate on SB 253 or amend it to include appropriate protections for children. I am happy to answer any questions that you may have.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Holly A. Stevens". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Holly A. Stevens, Esq.