



April 4, 2023

Honorable Chair Sharon Carson
Senate Judiciary
State House Room 100
107 North Main Street, Concord, NH 03301

RE: NAMI NH Support of HB 49 as amended by the House

Honorable Chair Carson 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 HB 49 as amended by the House (HB 49), relative to postponing the closure of the Sununu youth Services Center.

Under current New Hampshire law, the Sununu Youth Services Center (SYSC) is funded through June 2023, with no appropriation for a new center. SB 1 as amended by the House, which passed into law earlier in this session, contained an appropriation for the state to procure an architect, but not for a replacement facility. Without additional legislative action, there will be further delay in building a new Youth Detention Center (YDC). It would be irresponsible for our state to allow this delay to happen. NAMI NH applauds the efforts of the Senate, first through SB 1 as amended by the Senate, and now via the consideration of HB 49, to get legislation passed to replace the current facility and outline the environment, services, and treatment to be provided by the new facility.

Many children enter the juvenile justice system inappropriately as a result of unmet mental health needs. The majority of children in the juvenile justice system have a diagnosable mental health disorder. Therefore, NAMI NH strongly supports a new facility, as outlined in HB 49 as amended by the House, that utilizes trauma informed care and provides services to meet the mental health needs of all children served in the center. NAMI NH further supports the plans contained in HB 49 to have staff trained to work with youth with behavioral health challenges and trauma histories; to use evidence-based practices in treatment; to provide frequent visitation opportunities with family; and to implement educational programming and staffing tailored to the individualized educational needs of the youth, including special education needs. We also support the plan to implement the programming in the current facility "as soon as reasonably practicable," rather than waiting until the new YDC has been built. Further, NAMI NH supports state control of the facility as set forth in the bill.

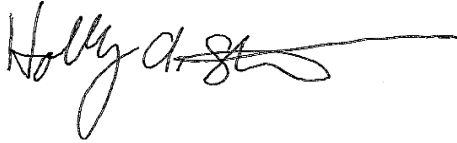
Although the bill as amended by House floor amendment #2023-1104 passed the House on a voice vote, the prior votes and House floor discussion on this and other amendments to the bill suggest

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that many members of the House do not support various provisions of HB 49. Therefore, if given an opportunity to reevaluate the bill during a Committee of Conference, the House could revert back to past positions on this bill. As such, NAMI NH urges the members of the Senate Judiciary Committee to strongly consider this possibility and support HB 49 as it came over from the House, rather than attempting to amend it. I am available to answer any questions the committee 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.