



March 29, 2023

Honorable Chairman Wayne MacDonald  
House Health and Human Services and Elderly Affairs Committee  
Legislate Office Building Room 205  
North Main St., Concord, NH 03301  
RE: NAMI NH Support for SB 85

Dear Chair MacDonald 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 85, relative to emergency behavioral health services and behavioral health crisis programs.

It's no secret that New Hampshire is in the midst of a mental health crisis. Suicide is the second leading cause of death for individuals ages 10-34, the third leading cause for individuals ages 35-44, and the fourth leading cause for individuals ages 45-54. Last year in the Granite State, 279 lives were lost to suicide and 53,000 adults contemplated suicide. One in five adults in the US experience mental illness each year and 221,000 adults in New Hampshire have a mental health condition. Additionally, 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. More than half of people with a mental health condition in the US did not receive any treatment last year. In New Hampshire, 92,510 people live in a community that does not have enough mental health professionals.

SB 85 recognizes the importance of creating a sustainable behavioral health crisis stabilization system throughout the entire state, setting forth a new definition of a behavioral health crisis program. This definition includes the three pillars of the crisis continuum recommended by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA): someone to call, someone to respond, and some place to go. The someone to call is the 988 crisis phone number or the NH Rapid Response Access Point, the someone to respond is the mobile crisis team at each community mental health center, and the someplace to go is a short term crisis stabilization unit. The goal of the overarching crisis system is to reduce the need for individuals to go to the emergency room during a mental health or substance use disorder crisis.

In addition to setting forth the framework for a crisis stabilization system, and in keeping with parity requirements, this bill amends the statutory definition of "Emergency Services" to include emergency mental health and substance use disorder services when provided within the mental health crisis program, even if those services are not provided in a hospital environment. This will ensure that insurance preauthorization is not a barrier to mental health crisis care. SB 85 also creates a commission to explore ways to sustainably fund the crisis system. Currently, the 988

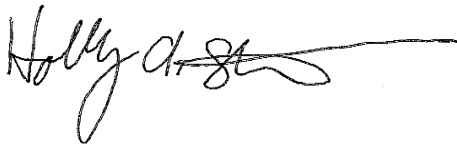
*Find Help, Find Hope.*

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](mailto:info@naminh.org) / [www.NAMINH.org](http://www.NAMINH.org)

call centers are being funded with COVID relief dollars, which will fund the call centers through 2024. It is vital that New Hampshire design a sustainable funding system to assist with the mental health crisis.

SB 85 goes a long way in addressing our current mental health crisis by defining a crisis system; establishing some parity between physical health and behavioral health in emergency care; and establishing a commission to assure New Hampshire's crisis system is sustainable. For these reasons, NAMI NH urges the committee to recommend SB 85 ought to pass. I am available to answer any questions the committee may have.

Sincerely,

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

Holly A, Stevens, Esq.

*Find Help, Find Hope.*

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](mailto:info@naminh.org) / [www.NAMINH.org](http://www.NAMINH.org)