



April 19, 2023

Honorable Chair Wayne MacDonald
House Health, Human Services and Elderly Affairs Committee
Legislative Office Building Room 205
33 N State St., Concord, NH 03301

RE: NAMI NH Support for SB 238

Dear Chair and Committee Members:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. My name is Sam Hawkins, and I am the Public Policy Assistant at NAMI NH, 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 238, relative to the use of telemedicine to treat mental health conditions.

It's no secret that New Hampshire is amid a mental health crisis. In New Hampshire, 221,000 adults have a mental health condition, including 57,000 who have a serious mental illness. Further exacerbating this crisis, Granite Staters struggle to get the help they need, when they need it, waiting months for initial outpatient mental health appointments. One of the driving factors behind these long wait lists is New Hampshire's workforce shortage. Mental health providers can't meet our state's level of need through our current channels.

Telemedicine is one crucial tool to be used in addressing the workforce shortage and increasing access to mental health services, especially in rural areas of the state.

During the pandemic, the Governor and federal government issued several emergency orders, which expanded telemedicine. These emergency orders allowed providers to provide all medically necessary services remotely. When telemedicine was passed into state law last year, it contained restrictions on the prescription of certain medications. SB 238 would codify a more expansive prescribing law for mental health conditions, thereby putting in statute parts of the emergency orders from the pandemic that were not considered last year.

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Telemedicine expands access to care for all and is well-suited to many of the challenges those living with mental health conditions may experience. Through supporting the mental health workforce and lowering barriers to care, SB 238 would go far in addressing the mental health crisis in our state. Therefore, NAMI NH urges the committee to vote SB 238 ought to pass.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Samuel C. Hawkins". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'S' and a long horizontal flourish at the end.

Samuel C. Hawkins