



April 4, 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 SB263

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 strong support of SB 263, extending the New Hampshire granite advantage health care program and reestablishing the commission to evaluate the effectiveness and future of the New Hampshire granite advantage health care program.

Of all the challenges facing Granite Staters, our mental health crisis is paramount. In New Hampshire, 221,000 adults have a mental health condition, and 15,000 minors ages 12-17 have depression. Despite the availability of effective treatment, over half the individuals living with a mental health condition in the US do not receive treatment. Like other medical illnesses, delays in treatment mean progression of the seriousness of the illness and more difficulty and cost when the person does eventually receive treatment. For those living with a mental illness, these delays can result in outstanding personal and productive losses that harm their livelihoods and could be life-threatening. In 2021, of the adults in New Hampshire who did not receive mental health care, nearly 42% did not because of cost.

Increasing access to care is crucial in addressing New Hampshire's mental health crisis and reducing the human and financial cost of untreated mental illness on our state. NAMI NH applauds the current success of the New Hampshire Granite Advantage Health Care Program and the efforts to reauthorize it in perpetuity.

Find Help, Find Hope.

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The positive impact this program has in improving access to care is obvious. In 2021, through the Medicaid expansion program, over 11,000 unique individuals received mental health outpatient services; nearly 830 accessed inpatient psychiatric hospitalization; and over 26,500 obtained mental health medication. Regarding our rising rates of youth mental illness, research shows that more children are covered by insurance in states with Medicaid Expansion than in those without.

This program also goes a long way in addressing our state's substance use crisis, as more than 7,000 individuals in the program sought substance use disorder outpatient services; 7,500 engaged with medication assisted treatment; and 2,300 obtained inpatient or residential SUD treatment.

SB 263, which reauthorizes the crucial and successful New Hampshire Granite Advantage Health Care Program, is one of the most impactful measures the legislature can employ in supporting Granite Staters. For these reasons, NAMI NH strongly encourages the committee to vote Ought to Pass for SB 263.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Samuel C. Hawkins". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Samuel C. Hawkins