



May 2, 2023

Honorable Chair Sharon Carson  
Senate Judiciary Committee  
State House Room 100  
107 N Main St., Concord, NH 03301

RE: NAMI NH Support for HB 114

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 HB 114, relative to the age at which a minor may receive mental health treatment without parental consent.

There are few issues facing New Hampshire as pressing as our mental health crisis, especially as it impacts youth and young adults. One in six US youth ages 6-17 experiences a mental health disorder each year, and suicide is the second leading cause of death for Granite Staters ages 10-34. Further, emerging New Hampshire data shows alarming leaps in all suicide related items for 9<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> grade students from 2019 to 2021. The percentage of students who felt sad or hopeless increased from 33.6% to 44.2%; students who seriously considered suicide went from 18.4% to 24.7%; students who made a suicide plan went from 13.3% to 19.3%; and the percentage of students who attempted suicide increased from 7% to 9.8%.

New Hampshire needs to look at new ways to address the youth mental health crisis and reduce barriers to care. HB 114, which would allow youth 16 and older to receive treatment without parental consent, is one important measure in doing so.

Many factors impact an individual's willingness to seek care for their mental health. Concerns over personal privacy, social stigma, and the fear of rejection have the potential to leave someone to face their mental health issues alone and in silence. Like other medical conditions, delays in treatment often means progression of the seriousness of the illness and more difficulty when the person does eventually receive treatment. For those

*Find Help, Find Hope.*

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living with a mental illness, these delays can result in outstanding personal and productive losses that harm their livelihoods and could be life-threatening.

Where possible, we believe that familial support and involvement can make a huge positive impact on a minor's path through mental health treatment. In NAMI NH's experience, providers who are proficient in their practice will focus on helping a child get to a point where they feel comfortable reaching out to their parent or guardian for support. For those minors who would be unsafe disclosing their condition or would feel more comfortable taking their first steps towards treatment privately, access to care without parental consent is crucial and could be potentially lifesaving.

For these reasons, NAMI NH urges the committee to vote Ought to Pass for HB 114.

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, sweeping underline.

Samuel C. Hawkins