



January 25, 2024

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

RE: NAMI NH Support for SB 360

Dear Chair Carson 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 360, relative to extreme risk protection orders.

The United States Surgeon General has identified that suicide is a major public health issue in the US, and one that is largely preventable. The impact of a single death is profound and ripples out to the family, friends, schools, workplaces, first responders and beyond. In addition to the human impact, it also has a significant economic impact with the estimates of the cost of each suicide death being \$1.3 million dollars – predominantly in lost wages. According to the US Center for Disease Control, data as of 2019 showed that the economic impact of suicides and suicide attempts on the nation was almost \$70 billion per year in lifetime medical and work-loss costs alone.

It is important to note that 90% of people who survive a suicide attempt do not go on to die by suicide. Unlike most other means of suicide, use of a firearm in a suicide attempt is almost always lethal and leaves little opportunity for intervention. While people may contemplate suicide for a long period of time, when they make the decision to end their life, there is often very little time elapsed between that point and them making an attempt. Toward that end, temporarily restricting access to lethal means– in this case firearms– is an important suicide prevention strategy and one that is recommended in the National Strategy For Suicide Prevention.

In New Hampshire, the rate of gun suicide increased 55% from 2009 to 2018, compared to a 19% increase nationwide.¹ As indicated by the accompanying chart, in New Hampshire

¹ Everytown data sheet, <https://maps.everytownresearch.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Every-State-Fact-Sheet-2.0-042720-NewHampshire.pdf>

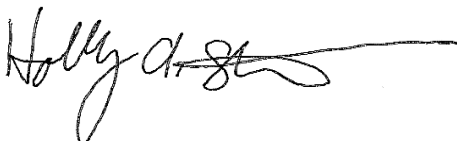
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suicide is the second leading cause of death for individuals ages 10-34 and the fourth leading cause of death for individuals ages 35-44. From 2018-2021, firearms were used in 50% of suicide deaths in New Hampshire. During that same period, of all firearm deaths, suicide accounted for 88%. Every year, an average of 124 people in New Hampshire die by gun suicides.²

Simply put, temporarily restricting access to firearms when an individual poses a significant risk of causing harm to themselves or others is a commonsense measure to assist in addressing the major public health issue of suicide in New Hampshire. Therefore, NAMI NH urges the committee to vote ought to pass on SB 360.

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.

² EveryStat New Hampshire, <https://everystat.org/#NewHampshire>

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