

January 25, 2024

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

RE: NAMI NH Opposition to SB 573

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 writing in opposition to SB 573, relative to parental consent for medical care.

The youth mental health crisis facing our country is urgent. 1 in 6 U.S. Youth aged 6-17 experience a mental health disorder each year, and 50% of all lifetime mental illness starts by age 14. Despite this, the average delay between onset of mental illness symptoms and treatment is 11 years.¹ The reasons one may experience these delays are vast, but for youth and young adults, privacy can be a significant factor deterring them from seeking help.

Where possible, NAMI NH believes that family support and involvement makes a significant, positive contribution to youth recovery from a mental illness. However, this isn't the case for all youth, as some may feel unsafe or unready to open up to their parents at the start of their treatment journey.

For those youth who are in need of services but are not yet ready to involve their parents in their treatment, awareness of and access to mental health services is crucial for preventing the worsening of symptoms and ensuring positive mental health outcomes. SB

¹*Mental Health by the Numbers*, NAMI, <https://www.nami.org/mhstats>

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573, by requiring parental consent before solicitation, arrangement, or performance of mental health services, would limit access to care for the youth that need it most, causing delays in treatment and further jeopardizing their wellbeing. For these reasons, NAMI NH urges the committee to vote Inexpedient to Legislate for SB 573.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Samuel C. Hawkins". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned below the word "Sincerely,".

Samuel C. Hawkins