



January 9, 2024

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

RE: NAMI NH Support for SB 577

Dear Chair Carson 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 577, relative to imposing a waiting period between the purchase and delivery of a firearm.

When an individual is experiencing a mental health crisis, limiting their access to lethal means is a crucial step in preventing suicide and saving lives. 90% of individuals who attempt suicide do not go on to die by suicide later.<sup>1</sup> Attempts with a firearm, however, present a particularly high risk of lethality, with approximately 85% of attempts with a firearm being fatal.<sup>1</sup> Firearms are the most common method used in suicide attempts<sup>2</sup>, and suicide deaths make up the majority of all gun deaths. In New Hampshire, 88% of all gun deaths are suicides, compared to 57% nationally.<sup>3</sup>

All suicide deaths, however, are preventable, and imposing a waiting period before the purchase of a firearm is a key policy in pursuit of that goal. While an individual can experience suicidal ideation over a long period of time, the moment of crisis where one may attempt suicide is much smaller. Research has shown that the period of time between when one decides to attempt suicide and when the attempt is made is usually only minutes or hours, with approximately 70% deliberating for less than an hour.<sup>1</sup>

In these situations, any barrier to allowing an individual access to lethal means has the potential to alleviate the crisis, in turn reducing suicide attempts, limiting their chance of

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lethality, and saving lives. SB 577 is sound policy and presents an important opportunity to reduce gun and suicide deaths in New Hampshire. For these reasons, NAMI NH urges the committee to recommend OTP for SB577.

Sincerely,

Samuel C. Hawkins

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Samuel C. Hawkins". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping initial 'S'.

<sup>1</sup>*Means Matter*, Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health:

<https://www.hsph.harvard.edu/means-matter/>

<sup>2</sup>*Suicide Data and Statistics*, CDC: <https://www.cdc.gov/suicide/suicide-data-statistics.html>

<sup>3</sup>*New Hampshire*, EveryStat: <https://everystat.org/#NewHampshire>