



February 6, 2023

Honorable Chairman Rick Ladd
House Education Committee
Legislative Office Building Room 205-207
33 N State St., Concord, NH 03301

RE: NAMI NH Opposition to HB 1356

Dear Chairman Ladd 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 opposition to HB 1356, relative to the use of children's names and pronouns by public school employees.

NAMI NH believes that acceptance and support within one's community is a key factor of mental wellness. For youth, their school community, including teachers and staff, plays a significant role in their everyday life, and is an environment where they learn to grow as an individual and socially, connecting with their peers and forming trusting relationships with adults. Acceptance and support should be a key goal across all aspects of everyday life for youth and young adults, including at home and in school.

The importance of maintaining affirming environments for transgender youth cannot be overstated. According to the Trevor Project, in 2023, "Roughly half of transgender and nonbinary young people found their school to be gender-affirming, and those who did reported lower rates of attempting suicide."¹ For transgender and nonbinary youth specifically, respect for their chosen name and pronouns is a critical aspect of support. According to a study in the *Journal of Adolescent Health*², compared with youth who could not use their chosen name, young people who could use their name across all areas of their life "experienced 71 percent fewer symptoms of severe depression, a 34 percent decrease

¹2023 U.S. National Survey on the Mental Health of LGBTQ Young People, *The Trevor Project*, https://www.thetrevorproject.org/survey-2023/assets/static/05_TREVOR05_2023survey.pdf

²Russell, S. T., Pollitt, A. M., Li, G., & Grossman, A. H. (2018). Chosen name use is linked to reduced depressive symptoms, suicidal ideation, and suicidal behavior among transgender youth. *Journal of Adolescent Health*, 63(4), 503–505. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jadohealth.2018.02.003>

in reported thoughts of suicide and a 65 percent decrease in suicidal attempts.”³ In addition, according to the Trevor Project, “Transgender and nonbinary young people who reported that all of the people they live with respect their pronouns reported lower rates of attempting suicide.”¹

HB 1356 jeopardizes school as an affirming environment for transgender and nonbinary youth, putting their mental health at risk. For these reasons, NAMI NH urges the committee to vote ITL for HB 1356.

Sincerely,

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

Samuel C. Hawkins

¹2023 U.S. National Survey on the Mental Health of LGBTQ Young People, *The Trevor Project*, https://www.thetrevorproject.org/survey-2023/assets/static/05_TREVOR05_2023survey.pdf

³Using Chosen Names Reduces Odds of Depression and Suicide in Transgender Youths, *UTNews*, <https://news.utexas.edu/2018/03/30/name-use-matters-for-transgender-youths-mental-health/>

Find Help, Find Hope.

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