

February 7, 2024

Honorable Chair Regina Birdsell
Senate Health and Human Services Committee
Legislative Office Building 101
33 North State St., Concord, NH

RE: NAMI NH Support for SB 401

Dear Chair Birdsell 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 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 to speak in strong support of SB 401, relative to removing the prospective repeal of the New Hampshire granite advantage health care program and trust fund.

Of all the challenges facing Granite Staters, our mental health crisis is paramount. In New Hampshire, 221,000 adults have a mental health condition, and 15,000 minors ages 12-17 have depression. Despite the availability of effective treatment, over half the individuals living with a mental health condition in the US do not receive treatment. Like other medical illnesses, delays in treatment mean progression of the seriousness of the illness and more difficulty and cost when the person does eventually receive treatment. For those living with a mental illness, these delays can result in outstanding personal and productive losses that harm their livelihoods and could be life-threatening. In 2021, of the adults in New Hampshire who did not receive mental health care, nearly 42% did not because of cost.

Increasing access to care is crucial in addressing New Hampshire's mental health crisis and reducing the human and financial cost of untreated mental illness on our state. NAMI NH applauds the current success of the New Hampshire Granite Advantage Health Care

Find Help, Find Hope.

NAMI New Hampshire • 85 North State Street • Concord, NH 03301
InfoLine: 800-242-6264 • Tel. 603-225-5359 • Fax 603-228-8848 • info@naminh.org / www.NAMINH.org

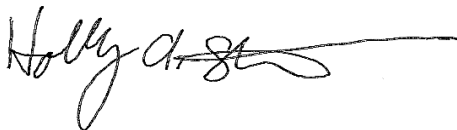
Program and the efforts to remove the prospective repeal of the program, making it permanent.

The positive impact this program has in improving access to care is obvious. In 2021, through the Medicaid expansion program, over 11,000 unique individuals received mental health outpatient services; nearly 830 accessed inpatient psychiatric hospitalization; and over 26,500 obtained mental health medication. Regarding our rising rates of youth mental illness, research shows that more children are covered by insurance in states with Medicaid expansion than in those without.

This program also goes a long way in addressing our state's substance use crisis, as more than 7,000 individuals in the program sought substance use disorder outpatient services; 7,500 engaged with medication assisted treatment; and 2,300 obtained inpatient or residential SUD treatment.

SB 401, which removes the prospective repeal of the New Hampshire Granite Advantage Health Care Program, is one of the most impactful measures the legislature can employ in supporting Granite Staters. For these reasons, NAMI NH strongly encourages the committee to vote Ought to Pass for SB 401.

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.