



January 23, 2025

Honorable Chairman Kenneth Weyler
House Finance Committee
Legislative Office Building Rooms 210-211
33 N State St., Concord, NH 03301

RE: NAMI NH Support for HB 519

Chairman Weyler 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 HB 519, making an appropriation to the department of health and human services to fund and support the Waypoint youth and young adult shelter.

People with mental illness are overrepresented in the unhoused population, as about 1 in 5 people experiencing homelessness in the U.S. have a serious mental health condition. Homelessness and housing instability have a profoundly negative impact on mental health. As a critical social determinant of health, stable housing is a crucial element of recovery for individuals living with a mental illness. Housing instability can contribute to stress, anxiety, and other mental health symptoms. At the same time, the symptoms of a serious mental health condition can make finding and maintaining housing more challenging.

A wide variety of programs and services are required to support individuals experiencing homelessness, including aiding in the recovery of those who may have a mental health condition. Waypoint's Emergency Homeless Shelter in Manchester, serving youth and young adults ages 18-24, is one such crucial program serving the needs of Granite State youth experiencing homelessness. This shelter provides a crucial safe space for youth, offering unique services tailored to their needs. Without these services, many youth will lose access to the safety, support, and services that this shelter provides, perpetuating their

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homelessness, jeopardizing their mental health and wellness, and increasing their risk of hospitalization or incarceration.

HB 519 provides crucial funding to support Waypoint's youth and young adult shelter, allowing the program to continue to provide essential services to youth and young adults. The need for these continued services is beyond urgent given the housing crisis, the prevalence of homelessness, and the youth mental health crisis here in New Hampshire. For these reasons, NAMI NH urges the committee to vote Ought to Pass for HB 519.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Samuel C. Hawkins". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the printed name.

Samuel C. Hawkins