



January 30, 2025

Honorable Chairman Terry Roy  
House Criminal Justice and Public Safety Committee  
Legislative Office Building Room 202-204  
33 N State St, Concord, NH 03301

RE: NAMI NH Support for HB 56

Chairman Roy and Committee Members:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony. 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 support of HB 56, requiring a background check and mandatory waiting period during certain firearm transfers.

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 and survive 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. In the Granite State, 87% of all gun deaths are suicide deaths, compared to 56% nationally.<sup>3</sup>

Suicide deaths, however, are largely 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 accessing lethal means has the potential to alleviate the crisis, in turn reducing suicide attempts, limiting their chance of lethality, and saving lives.

*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](mailto:info@naminh.org) / [www.NAMINH.org](http://www.NAMINH.org)

Simply put: temporarily limiting access to lethal means is an effective strategy in reducing suicide deaths. As such, the mandatory waiting period provision in HB 56 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 Ought to Pass for HB 56.

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

<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>