



February 5, 2025

Honorable Chairman Wayne MacDonald
House Health, Human Services and Elderly Affairs Committee
Legislative Office Building Room 201
33 N State St., Concord, NH 03301

RE: NAMI NH Opposition to HB 392

Chair 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 of HB 392, directing the dissolution of the department of health and human services' office of health equity, department of environmental services' functions for civil rights and environmental justice, and the governor's council on diversity and inclusion.

New Hampshire's ongoing mental health crisis is no secret – nor is its urgency lost on the state. The Granite State has a strong history of working to support individuals living with a mental illness and their families, through the work of community organizations, state agencies, and the legislature. Over the years, much progress has been made in improving access to necessary care for Granite Staters living with a mental health condition. However, NAMI NH has serious concerns that HB 392, by directing the dissolution of the Office of Health Equity, would work against this important progress and jeopardize care for vulnerable populations.

Throughout all of the programs and services provided by DHHS and contracted entities, the Office of Health Equity seeks to promote and protect access to equitable care for all, including access to crucial mental health services. Through this work, the office works to ensure that the department and all of its contracted providers are compliant with federal civil rights laws governing access to care for vulnerable populations. This includes the oversight of communications access programs, which assist individuals that are deaf, hard of hearing, disabled, or have other communication challenges in accessing the services they need to get and stay well.

Beyond legal compliance, the Office of Health Equity serves as a strategic leader across the department and the state as a whole to break down barriers to accessing care for all Granite Staters.

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

We know that, for a mental illness, treatment works, and recovery is possible – but only if people have access to the care they need. Every day, individuals, organizations, offices, and agencies throughout the state work to protect and promote access to necessary healthcare for our most vulnerable populations, so that they can get well, stay well, and thrive. This good work needs to continue. HB 392 works contrary to that goal. For these reasons, NAMI NH urges the committee to vote Inexpedient to Legislate for HB 392.

Sincerely,

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'.

Samuel C. Hawkins