



February 10, 2025

Honorable Chairman David Rochefort  
Senate Health and Human Services  
Legislate Office Building Room 101  
33 North State St., Concord, NH 03301

RE: NAMI NH Support for SB 128

Dear Chairman Rochefort 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 New Hampshire, 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 favor of SB 128, relative to children's mental health services for persons 18 years of age and younger.

The most visible symptom of New Hampshire's ongoing youth mental health crisis is the boarding of youth in emergency departments while waiting for inpatient care. In order to address this crisis, it is imperative that the state invest in community-based services that prevent the need to utilize higher levels of care.

High-fidelity wraparound services, known as FAST (Families and Systems Together) Forward are intensive family-focused services that can prevent the necessity for hospitalization when children or youth are experiencing serious emotional and behavioral concerns. It is an evidenced-based program that provides youth and family-driven wraparound services that are focused on keeping the child/youth in their home community. The goals of wraparound services are to help families and youth identify their strengths and their needs, then to develop a plan that connects them to supports (some formal, some natural) and services in their communities. As a provider of family peer support services through this program, NAMI NH can attest first-hand to its positive impact.

Currently, private insurance carriers do not cover or pay for certain services under the Fast Forward program. Despite not having coverage through their carriers, families with private insurance can still access FAST Forward at the expense of NH taxpayers

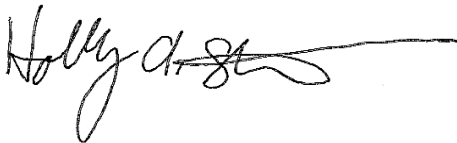
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with funding through the NH's Bureau of Children's Behavioral Health and through Medicaid. However, referrals for these services can come from a variety of sources, some of which may not be aware of the funding available through the department and may therefore be hesitant to make that referral, knowing that the family's health insurance will not cover the services and that they do not qualify for Medicaid if the child has never been hospitalized. Rather than waiting for the child to be sick enough for hospitalization, if commercial insurance paid for these services, services that their members are receiving at a cost to the state, the family could receive services earlier, potentially alleviating the need for a hospitalization. Additionally, if the burden for the costs of these services no longer rested on the Bureau of Children's Behavioral Health, those funds could be reallocated to support the System of Care in other areas. SB 128 provides a mechanism for covering these services for privately insured families by applying a small assessment per covered life to insurers.

SB 128 aims to ensure the needs of New Hampshire's most vulnerable children are met, and that insurers contribute to the crucial services their enrollees are receiving. Therefore, NAMI NH urges the committee to vote ought to pass on SB 128.

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.

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