



February 5, 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 244

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 244, relative to expanding access to primary health care services, increasing the number of direct health care providers, increasing Medicaid reimbursement rates, and making an appropriation therefor.

Workforce shortages continue to challenge New Hampshire as a whole; however, the impact is especially grave on the state's healthcare workforce. This includes mental healthcare providers, who struggle to attract and retain critically needed staff, resulting in excessive wait times for patients and increased risk of harmful burnout for dedicated professionals.

One in five adults and one in five youth aged 6-17 experience a mental illness each year in New Hampshire. More than half of people with a mental health condition in the U.S. did not receive any treatment in 2021. Of the 70,000 adults in New Hampshire who did not receive needed mental health care, 41.7% did not because of cost. Granite Staters are over three times more likely to be forced out of network for mental health care than primary care, which contributes to an increase on out-of-pocket costs for services. In 2021, nearly 40% of adults in New Hampshire reported symptoms of anxiety or depression and 17% of them were unable to get needed counseling or therapy. Due to the workforce shortage, many mental health providers have opted not to engage with commercial insurers because they have enough cash-paying patients to sustain their practice. This has led to individuals not being able to find providers covered by their insurance plans, which leads to an increased cost for services. NAMI NH has heard countless stories of people who were given a list of up to 20 providers by their insurer only to discover none of them are accepting new patients. In addition to commercial insurance shortages, due to low Medicaid reimbursement rates, there is a shortage of therapists who accept Medicaid. This includes the community mental health centers who struggle to recruit and retain therapists because the salary they can offer is less than private organizations due to low Medicaid reimbursement rates and the high percentage of Medicaid patients they serve.

Furthermore, there is a shortage of case managers. Case managers are a critical treatment team member for those with serious mental illness. Case managers assist individuals with all activities of

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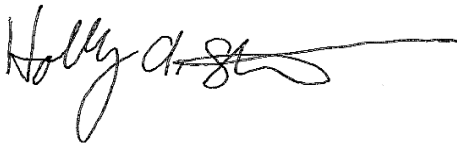
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daily living including coordination of appointments and transportation and help with basic needs such as housing and food. SB 244 would expand the State Loan Repayment Program to include bachelor's level individuals which would capture the case management profession. Having this additional incentive would increase interest in the profession and working in New Hampshire, rather than in another state.

When individuals with mental illness receive the right services, at the right place, at the right time, fewer folks will end up homeless, hospitalized, and/or incarcerated, all of which cost the state far more than providing community-based services. SB 244 takes a holistic approach to address the workforce crisis and includes provisions that establish pipeline development programs, expand student loan repayment programs, and increase Medicaid reimbursement rates for all Medicaid providers, all of which will help to address the workforce shortages.

Therefore, NAMI NH urges the committee to vote ought to pass on SB 244.

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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