



March 3, 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 712

Chairman MacDonald and Committee Members:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony. My name is Sam Hawkins, and I represent 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 writing in opposition of HB 712, limiting breast surgeries for minors.

NAMI NH believes that no one should be subject to practices or policies that can cause or worsen mental health symptoms, and, as such, opposes legislation that seeks to prohibit, limit, or criminalize access to clinically appropriate care. Too often, transgender and nonbinary individuals face stigma, discrimination, and challenges accessing necessary care. These challenges all contribute to higher rates of mental health conditions and suicidality. It is important to be clear that there is nothing inherent about one's status as a transgender or nonbinary person that contributes to poor mental health outcomes – rather, it is due to experiences with stigma and discrimination and being unable to receive necessary care and supports.

Access to care can be crucial to the health and well-being of transgender people of all ages, improving current mental health symptoms and reducing the likelihood of developing them in the future. Studies have shown that access to health care for transgender individuals can improve mental health outcomes,<sup>1</sup> including surgery.<sup>2</sup>

Though gender-affirming surgery is not typically used until adulthood, and this bill is primarily focused on minors, we do have concerns that the policy prohibiting referrals in HB 712 may impact access to and efficiency of care, even for adults. Transitioning is a long and complex process that is unique to the individual. If an individual is unable to even discuss and prepare for any appropriate procedures with a provider before they are 18, it is likely to extend the process, potentially contributing to the worsening of any mental health symptoms. Additionally, even though Granite Staters could hypothetically begin the process on their own with an out of state

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practitioner, without a referral from a treating provider in New Hampshire, it is likely that insurance would not cover the treatment.

Rather than creating barriers that unnecessarily limit access to care, our focus should be on promoting a system and process that connects people to the care they want and need on a timely basis so that their mental and physical health flourish. Transgender people, their families, and their providers deserve the ability to openly explore all clinically appropriate treatment options. For these reasons, NAMI NH urges the committee to vote Inexpedient to Legislate for HB 712.

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>*Mental health and quality of life outcomes of gender-affirming surgery: A systematic literature review*, <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/19359705.2021.2016537>

<sup>2</sup>*Association Between Gender-Affirming Surgeries and Mental Health Outcomes*, <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC8082431/>