



April 1, 2025

Honorable Chair Ruth Ward
Senate Education Committee
Legislative Office Building Room 101
33 N State St., Concord, NH 03301

RE: NAMI NH Support for HB 653

Chair Ward and Committee Members:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony. My name is Sam Hawkins, and I am representing 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 support of HB 653, establishing a pilot program within the department of education to implement alternatives to restraint and seclusion of students.

NAMI NH is deeply concerned by the physical and psychological risks for students associated with the use of restraint and seclusion in schools and believes that no one should be subjected to practices that can cause trauma or exacerbate existing mental health symptoms. We are further concerned by the fact that these practices are disproportionately used against students with disabilities, which includes children with a mental illness. A child who is experiencing and exhibiting symptoms of a mental health condition or crisis deserves a mental health response, not to be met with punitive practices that have no benefit to mental health or safety, do not reduce problematic behavior, and traumatize both student and staff. Truly no one benefits from the use of restraints and seclusion — not staff, not the student body at large, and especially not the child in crisis. HB 653 gets us closer to our goal of eliminating the use of restraints and seclusion by creating a trauma-informed, evidence-based, non-punitive alternative. For that reason, NAMI NH urges the committee to vote Ought to Pass for HB 653.

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

Find Help, Find Hope.

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