



January 21, 2026

Honorable Chair Kristin Noble  
House Education Policy and Administration  
One Granite Place, Room 232  
Concord, NH 03301

RE: NAMI NH Opposition of HB 1635

Dear Chairman Noble 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 speaking today in opposition of HB 1635, modifying the requirements of suicide prevention education policies in schools.

In 2019, there was a bipartisan effort to institute a practice of having suicide prevention training in every school in New Hampshire. This was done through SB 282. That year there were a few bills that the legislature considered on this topic, at least one considering a lesser amount of training. These bills were rejected in favor of SB 282 which instituted a provision for all schools to require two hours of suicide prevention training annually. At that time, this policy was supported by the Suicide Prevention Council.

In 2024, the United States Surgeon General identified suicide as a major public health issue in the US, and one that is largely preventable. The impact of a single death is profound and ripples out to the family, friends, schools, workplaces, first responders and beyond. In addition to the human impact, it also has a significant economic impact with the estimates of the cost of each suicide death being \$1.3 million dollars – predominantly in lost wages. According to the US Center for Disease Control, data as of 2019 showed that the economic impact of suicides and suicide attempts on the nation was almost \$70 billion per year in lifetime medical and work-loss costs alone.

In New Hampshire suicide is the **first** leading cause of death for individuals ages 10-14 and the **second** leading cause of death for individuals ages 15-24. In 2019, when SB 282 was passed, suicide was the second leading cause of death for individuals ages 10-14, which means that suicide for New Hampshire's youngest continues to be a growing, pressing concern. Goal 5 of the National Strategy for Suicide Prevention issued in 2024 specifically mentions the need for providing suicide prevention in schools, stating, "[f]or example, children, teens, and young adults spend significant time in schools, after-school programs,

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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](mailto:info@naminh.org) / [www.NAMINH.org](http://www.NAMINH.org)

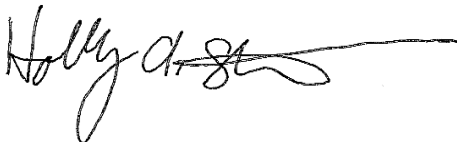
youth organizations, colleges, and workplaces. These are important locations for upstream prevention.”<sup>1</sup> Additionally, New Hampshire’s 2019 10-year mental health plan recommends renewed and intensified efforts to address suicide prevention, and specially identifies schools as one of the places that should receive increased funding for suicide prevention activities.

While suicide deaths are a relatively rare but tragic occurrence, they are the tip of the iceberg as the risk of suicidal thoughts and behavior among teens is quite high. The 2023 Youth Risk Behavior Survey of New Hampshire high school students indicates:

- 39.6% reported feeling so sad or hopeless every day for 2 or more weeks that they had stopped doing usual activities (matches the diagnostic criteria for depression)
- 21.3% reported they had seriously considered attempting suicide
- 16.9% reported making a plan about how they would attempt suicide
- 8.5% reported having made 1 more suicide attempts during the past year
- 2.6% indicated they had received medical attention from a doctor or nurse for their suicide attempt.

All of these percentages have increased since the 2019 bill passed requiring suicide training for school personnel. These numbers peaked in 2021 and have since come down slightly. Now is not the time to reduce the amount of suicide prevention training school personnel receives. Therefore, NAMI NH urges the committee to vote inexpedient to legislate on HB 1635.

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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<sup>1</sup> U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), National Strategy for Suicide Prevention. Washington, DC: HHS, April 2024.

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