

February 25, 2026

Honorable Chairman Wayne MacDonald
House Health, Human Services & Elderly Affairs Committee
Granite Place Room 158
1 Granite Pl, Concord, NH 03301

RE: NAMI NH Opposition to HB 1797

Chairman MacDonald and Committee Members:

On behalf of NAMI NH, the National Alliance on Mental Illness, I write in opposition to HB 1797, relative to eligibility for public assistance, including the New Hampshire employment program, family assistance program, and SNAP.

Food security, as an essential social determinant of health, is critical to supporting the mental health of individuals and families and to avoid poor health outcomes and chronic illness. Indeed, a person's access to food can impact and be impacted by one's mental health, as the symptoms of a mental health condition can impact eating habits and hinder one's ability to access or afford groceries, and the stress and anxiety of food insecurity can contribute to poor mental health. Research has found that adults living with a mental health disability are up to five times more likely to live in a household that is food insecure.¹

With this in mind, food assistance programs, such as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) can help foster and support quality mental health. Research shows that SNAP benefits can significantly decrease psychological distress among participating households.² In turn, we believe that this improved mental health can help people continue in their recovery and address factors contributing to their need for those benefits.

As such, NAMI NH stands in opposition to policies that limit access to assistance programs such as SNAP. HB 1797, by removing the state's ability to grant categorical eligibility or provide flexibility in work requirements and asset standards, will make it more difficult for individuals and their families to access necessary benefits and limits our capacity to tailor our policies in response to the unique needs of Granite Staters.

Find Help, Find Hope.

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 / www.NAMINH.org

Our policies should promote access and dignity for families in need of support so that they can get well, stay well, and thrive. The policies in HB 1797 stand contrary to these goals. For this reason, NAMI NH urges the committee to recommend ITL for HB 1797.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Sam Hawkins". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the printed name.

Sam Hawkins

¹*Adults With Disabilities, Especially Mental Health Disabilities, Are at a Higher Risk for Food Insecurity*, US Department of Agriculture (2017)

²*Association of Participation in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program and Psychological Distress*, Oddo VM, Mabli J., American Journal of Public Health (2015)