



February 11, 2026

Honorable Chairman Wayne MacDonald
House Health, Human Services and Elderly Affairs
One Granite Place, Room 158
Concord, NH 03301

RE: NAMI NH Opposition to HB 1372

Dear Chairman MacDonald 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 writing today in opposition of HB 1372, establishing a commission to study the feasibility of reestablishing a state psychiatric hospital for adults with severe mental illness.

Throughout the organization's history, NAMI NH has long advocated for investments in quality, evidence-based mental health services that can appropriately meet the needs of individuals and families. Over the past several years, increased attention has been paid to the state's inpatient psychiatric capacity, especially in relation to the emergency department (ED) boarding crisis. Though the intent of HB 1372 may be to study the need for mental health services here in New Hampshire, as drafted, would not meaningfully address the needed investments that have been identified by stakeholders and the state.

New Hampshire Hospital, the state's inpatient psychiatric hospital, has a maximum capacity of 185 beds. Through the work of the Mission Zero initiative to end ED boarding, much data has emerged showing the issues within the state's existing mental health system. On any given day, there are 100-115 people who are medically stable and ready for discharge, and have been for a minimum of 15 days. However, these folks have no place to go, not due to a lack of inpatient resources, but instead insufficient *community* resources to support their needs. With appropriate investments in community resources, these people could be discharged from the hospital, freeing up over half of the beds in the facility and potentially even completely eliminating the emergency room boarding crisis. I have attached a chart to my written testimony which demonstrates the back door issue. The area shaded in tan are those who are stable and waiting for discharge, and the blue represents those who are receiving active treatment.

Find Help, Find Hope.

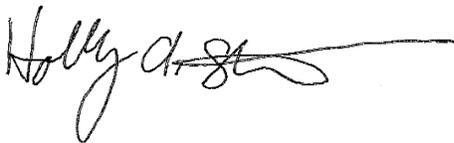
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This back-door problem costs the state about \$1600 per person per day who remains in the hospital while medically stable because commercial insurance and Medicaid can no longer be billed. This equates to about \$160,000 every day that the state is spending to house medically stable people at New Hampshire Hospital. Those funds could be better spent on community resources such as supportive housing resources and other options whose programs could bill the person's health plan, and more importantly, return them to their community. However, the current language of HB 1372 is focused solely on "reestablishing a state psychiatric hospital," rather than charging the commission with examining issues with the system more broadly.

Additionally, other than legislators, the proposed commission only includes a DHHS designee and a DOC designee. We feel strongly that any commission studying these or similar services should also minimally include a community mental health provider, an individual with lived experience, and stakeholders representing the impacted community.

NAMI NH would welcome the opportunity to work with the sponsors of the bill to create an amendment that will alter the focus of the commission to studying the entire mental health system, rather than focusing solely on psychiatric inpatient care, and include additional members as referenced above. NAMI NH would like to be considered for inclusion on the commission. If included, we would happily serve and work alongside other commission members to gather information and propose solutions to strengthen our mental health system. However, as introduced, NAMI NH would urge the committee to vote inexpedient to legislate on HB 1372, as it would not address the necessary factors to strengthen New Hampshire's mental health system.

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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