

February 18, 2026

Honorable Chairman Howard Pearl
Senate Executive Departments & Administration Committee
State House Room 103
107 N Main St., Concord, NH 03301

RE: NAMI NH Opposition to HB 392

Chairman Pearl and Committee Members:

On behalf of NAMI NH, the National Alliance on Mental Illness, I write in opposition to HB 392, directing the dissolution of the department of health and human services' office of health access and the department of environmental services' functions for environmental justice.

Over the past several years, New Hampshire advocates, policymakers, stakeholders, and agencies have worked collaboratively to address the mental health crisis, prevent suicide, eliminate emergency department boarding, and improve access to mental health care for every Granite Stater and their families. Through this effort the state has made meaningful progress in supporting its communities and need, though there is still plenty of work to be done. We have grave concerns that HB 392, by eliminating the Office of Health Access, would jeopardize the progress we have worked so hard to achieve.

Throughout the full suite of programs and services provided by NH DHHS and its contracted entities, the Office of Health Access works to improve and protect access to care for Granite Staters in every region, who may face significant and unique challenges in getting the help they need. This includes the oversight of communications access programs, which assist individuals that are deaf, hard of hearing, disabled, or have other communication challenges in accessing the services they need to get and stay well.

Though the amended version of HB 392 shifts some responsibilities of the Office elsewhere in the department, the listed duties do not encompass the full impact of the Office's current work. Additionally, the splintering of these efforts will hinder collaboration and cross-coordination not only within the department, but for providers, partners, and the system as a whole.

The Office of Health Access serves as a strategic leader to enable the state to break down barriers to accessing care for Granite Staters. As an office wholly dedicated to this effort, the Office brings the expertise and visibility necessary to assess and eliminate access barriers. The value of such a

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voice within the state's ongoing and future initiatives, such as Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinic implementation and the Rural Health Transformation Program cannot be overstated.

We know that treatment for a mental illness works, and recovery is possible – but only if people have access to the care they need. Every day, individuals, organizations, offices, and agencies throughout the state work to protect and promote access to necessary healthcare for our most vulnerable populations, so that they can get well, stay well, and thrive. Rather than bolstering that work, HB 392 moves us backwards, and would affect not only the office, but every organization, provider, partner, and person who relies on their assistance, services, and mission. For these reasons, NAMI NH urges the committee to vote Inexpedient to Legislate for HB 392.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Sam Hawkins".

Sam Hawkins

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