



March 25, 2026

Honorable Chair Erica Layon
House Executive Departments & Administration
Granite Place Room 231
1 Granite Pl, Concord, NH 03301

RE: NAMI NH Support for SB 423

Chair Layon and Committee Members:

On behalf of NAMI NH, the National Alliance on Mental Illness, I write in support of SB 423, reestablishing the commission to study the incidence of post-traumatic stress disorder in first responders.

Nationwide, more attention is being paid to the topic of first responder mental health. These brave folks are usually the first to arrive at difficult and dangerous scenes, dealing directly with tragedies that may have a direct impact on their own physical and mental health and wellbeing. Compared to the general population, first responders experience higher rates of depression, post-traumatic stress disorder, and anxiety. Data from the US Department of Health and Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration showed that 30% of first responders have a mental health condition. This equates to nearly one in three first responders with a mental health condition as opposed to one in five in the general population.

NAMI NH Executive Director Susan Stearns has served on the commission reestablished under this bill, and as such, can testify firsthand to the work this group has accomplished. Over the history of this commission, it has carried out extensive study and generated meaningful discussion of the resources and supports that can be strengthened for first responders in New Hampshire. Through a holistic approach, driven by the lived experience and expertise of its members, this commission has carefully considered and made recommendations regarding workers compensation and other benefits, certification of comfort dogs and additional supports, considerations of community culture surrounding mental health in first responders, and much more.

SB 423 offers an opportunity for this commission to continue its diligent work and continue to strengthen and coordinate the resources New Hampshire needs to support our current and future first responders. As such, NAMI NH urges the committee to support SB 423.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sam Hawkins". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Sam Hawkins

Find Help, Find Hope.

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