



April 14, 2026

Honorable Chairman William Gannon
Senate Judiciary Committee
State House Room 100
107 N. Main Street
Concord, NH 03301

RE: NAMI NH Opposition to HB 1793

Dear Chairman Gannon 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 1793, prohibiting public colleges and universities from regulating the possession or carrying of firearms and non-lethal weapons on campus.

Research demonstrates that many mental illnesses emerge in late adolescence and early adulthood. This is especially true for depression, other mood disorders, and schizophrenia.¹ This often means that just as young people are launching into adulthood, where they are exposed to new social situations, pressures, and stressors, many may also be dealing with untreated mental health symptoms, including psychosis. Unfortunately, we also know that while, generally, mental illnesses may emerge before adulthood, treatment typically does not occur until several years later.² With this in mind, we are gravely concerned that open access to lethal means such as firearms on college campuses may lead to preventable suicide deaths.

It is important to note that 90% of people who survive a suicide attempt do not go on to die by suicide. However, unlike many other means of suicide, use of a firearm is almost always lethal and leaves little opportunity for intervention. Given the lethality of firearms, we believe that limiting access to them on college campuses when youth and young adults who may be dealing with new and untreated mental health symptoms and living far away from family and other natural supports could save lives.

¹ Sebastian Ocklenburg, Ph. D, [At What Age Does Mental Illness Begin?](https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/the-asymmetric-brain/202106/what-age-does-mental-illness-begin), Psychology Today, June 18, 2021; <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/the-asymmetric-brain/202106/what-age-does-mental-illness-begin>

² Kessler RC, Amminger GP, Aguilar-Gaxiola S, Alonso J, Lee S, Ustün TB. Age of onset of mental disorders: a review of recent literature. *Curr Opin Psychiatry*. 2007 Jul;20(4):359-64. doi: 10.1097/YCO.0b013e32816ebc8c. PMID: 17551351; PMCID: PMC1925038.

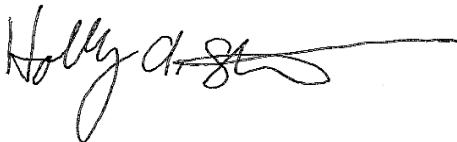
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In New Hampshire, the rate of gun suicide increased 55% from 2009 to 2018, compared to a 19% increase nationwide.³ Also in the Granite State, suicide is the second leading cause of death for individuals ages 15-34. From 2018-2021, firearms were used in 50% of suicide deaths in New Hampshire. During that same period, of all firearm deaths, suicide accounted for 88%. Every year, an average of 124 people in New Hampshire die by gun suicides.⁴ According to the most recent Youth Risk Behavior Survey Data, 21.3% of New Hampshire's Youth have seriously considered suicide and 16.9% have made a plan for suicide in the past year.⁵ These are the same individuals who are launching into young adulthood and onto college campuses, including ones in New Hampshire.

Simply put, allowing public colleges and universities to restrict access to firearms on their campuses, where there are undiagnosed and untreated mental illnesses, is a commonsense measure to assist in addressing the major public health issue of suicide in New Hampshire. Therefore, NAMI NH urges the committee to vote inexpedient to legislate on HB 1793.

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.

³ Everytown data sheet, <https://maps.everytownresearch.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Every-State-Fact-Sheet-2.0-042720-NewHampshire.pdf>

⁴ EveryStat New Hampshire, <https://everystat.org/#NewHampshire>

⁵ New Hampshire 2023 Youth Risk Behavior Survey data.

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