

April 16, 2026

Honorable Chairman John Hunt  
House Commerce & Consumer Affairs  
Granite Place Room 229  
1 Granite Pl, Concord, NH 03301

**RE: NAMI NH Support for SB 498**

Chairman Hunt and Committee Members:

On behalf of NAMI NH, the National Alliance on Mental Illness, I write in support of SB 498, relative to children's mental health services for persons 18 years of age and younger.

For several years, New Hampshire's state agencies, policymakers, stakeholders, and community members have worked collaboratively to strengthen the state's system of care for youth and their families impacted by mental health conditions, suicide, and ongoing care crises including the emergency department (ED) boarding crisis. A key component of NH's children's system of care is FAST (Families and Systems Together) Forward, the state's high fidelity wraparound program.

FAST Forward is an evidence-based program that offers intensive services focused on supporting the youth as well as their family as they navigate treatment and keeping the child/youth in their home community. Wraparound services help families and youth identify their strengths and needs, then develop a plan to connect with formal and natural supports and services in their communities. As a provider of family peer support services through this program, NAMI NH can attest first-hand to its positive impact on those who are able to access the program.

However, not every young person in New Hampshire who may need wraparound services is able to access it. Currently, commercially insured youth are not able to access coverage for services under the Fast Forward program through their private plan, and there is no comparable service available through their plan to address their needs. For these youth, this often means trying and failing to successfully access treatment until the child's condition worsens to the point that they qualify for taxpayer-funded coverage of these services through state general funds and Medicaid.

This is not a new challenge. For several years, in community meetings, hearings, and commissions, this issue has been identified and carefully discussed but not addressed. Rather than waiting for a child to be sick enough for hospitalization and therefore state payment for services, if commercial

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insurance paid for the full bundle of wraparound services, the family could access care earlier, potentially alleviating the need for a hospitalization and improving long-term outcomes.

SB 498 is the result of several years of work and collaboration to ensure that commercially insured families can access the services they need and pay for and ensure long term health and recovery. For these reasons, NAMI NH urges the committee to recommend Ought to Pass for SB 498.

Sincerely,

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

Sam Hawkins

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