

April 2, 2026

Honorable Chairman Daryl Abbas
Senate Children & Family Law
State House Room 100
107 N Main St., Concord, NH 03301

RE: Mental Health Impacts of HB 1376

Chairman Abbas and Committee Members:

On behalf of NAMI NH, the National Alliance on Mental Illness, I write to express concerns regarding the mental health impacts of HB 1376, relative to a parent's ability to raise their child in a manner consistent with the child's biological sex.

NAMI NH firmly believes that fundamental family relationships, especially that of children and their parents, is a critical element of a young person's development and the impact it has on their lifelong mental health, wellness, and opportunity. Undoubtedly, these relationships are the most impactful within a child's life with far reaching impacts throughout their adulthood. With this in mind, we believe policies that promote connection and collaboration between parents and children can help support lifelong mental health and positive outcomes for the entire family. HB 1376, however, does not aim to strengthen family relationships, but instead drives a perceived wedge between parents and their children in an attempt to address a problem that does not exist.

Perhaps more troubling is the impacts of HB 1376 on youth within the foster system and the larger system itself. Already, youth with foster care experience face significantly higher rates of mental health challenges than their peers in the general population, with more than half of adolescents in the child welfare system having been diagnosed with at least one mental health disorder.¹ For these youth, past life events and their experiences within the foster care system can present significant emotional challenges that can impact their present and lifelong mental health. For that reason, it is critically important that child-placing agencies have complete flexibility to consider a full range of supportive factors for these youth where they may be placed.

Supportive environments are crucial for all youth – including young people who identify as transgender or nonbinary. A 2024 study showed that 68% of transgender and nonbinary young people in New Hampshire reported experiencing symptoms of anxiety, 44% experienced depression, and 40% seriously considered attempting suicide.² However, it is important to note that these outcomes are largely linked to experiences with stigma and discrimination, as well as

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being unable to receive necessary care and supports. Inversely, receiving high support from family is an important protective factor independently associated with a reduction in the likelihood of anxiety, depressive symptoms, and suicidal ideation for LGBTQ+ youth.³

HB 1376 places undue stress on the foster care system, limits the ability to connect youth with crucial protective factors, and creates a perceived divide between parents and children, all without meaningfully enhancing family connections and resources. For these reasons, NAMI NH urges the committee to not move HB 1376 forward and instead invest in policies that strengthen the family bond, cultivate connection and collaboration, and protect youth mental health.

Sincerely,

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

Sam Hawkins

¹*The Future of Behavioral Health Services for Youth with Foster Care Experience*, National Foster Youth Initiative

²*2024 Survey on the Mental Health of LGBTQ+ Young People in New Hampshire*, The Trevor Project

³*Project SPARK Interim Report: A Longitudinal Study of Risk and Protective Factors in LGBTQ+ Youth Mental Health (2023-2025)*, The Trevor Project