



January 10, 2024

Honorable Chair Regina Birdsell
Senate Health and Human Services
Legislate Office Building Room 101
North Main St., Concord, NH 03301

RE: NAMI NH Support for SB 403

Dear Chair Birdsell 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 here today to speak in favor of SB 403, relative to health care workforce investments.

Workforce shortages continue to challenge New Hampshire as a whole; however, the impact is especially grave on the state's healthcare workforce. This includes mental healthcare providers, who struggle to attract and retain critically needed staff, resulting in excessive wait times for patients and increased risk of harmful burnout for dedicated professionals.

One in five adults and one in six youth aged 6-17 experience a mental illness each year in New Hampshire. More than half of people with a mental health condition in the U.S. did not receive any treatment last year. Of the 70,000 adults in New Hampshire who did not receive needed mental health care, 41.7% did not because of cost. Granite Staters are over three times more likely to be forced out of network for mental health care than primary care, which contributes to an increase on out-of-pocket costs for services. In 2021, nearly 40% of adults in New Hampshire reported symptoms of anxiety or depression and 17% of them were unable to get needed counseling or therapy. Due to the workforce shortage, many mental health providers have opted not to engage with commercial insurers because they have enough cash-paying patients to sustain their practice. This has led to individuals not being able to find providers covered by their insurance plans, which leads to an increased cost for services. NAMI NH has heard countless stories of people who were given a list of up

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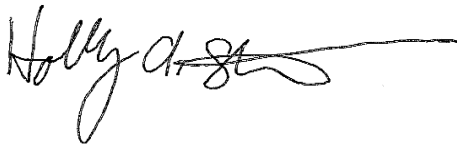
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to 20 providers by their insurer only to discover none of them are accepting new patients.

When individuals with mental illness receive the right services, at the right place, at the right time, fewer folks will end up homeless, hospitalized, and/or incarcerated, all of which cost the state far more than providing community-based services. SB 403 takes a holistic approach to address the workforce crisis and includes provisions that establish pipeline development programs and expand student loan repayment programs that will help to address the workforce shortages.

Therefore, NAMI NH urges the committee to vote ought to pass on SB 403.

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.

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