

February 21, 2017

Honorable Frank Kotowski  
House Health and Human Services and Elderly Services Committee  
Room 205 Legislative Office Building  
33 N. State Street  
Concord, NH 03301

Dear Chairman Kotowski and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. My name is Kenneth Norton and I serve as Executive Director of NAMI NH, the National Alliance on Mental Illness. I also have a family member with a serious mental illness and co-occurring substance use disorder. On behalf of NAMI NH, I am here to speak in support of HB 587. I am also here today to speak as a Licensed Independent Clinical Social Worker (LICSW) in the state of NH and as member of the National Association of Social Workers (NASW). NASW has opposed conversion therapy since 1992 as having no basis in science and being in direct conflict with the NASW Code of Ethics.

One of the maxims that all health professionals should aspire to is to *do no harm*. The potential for harm caused by conversion therapy rises beyond shame and trauma; which can have lifelong impacts, and has the potential to be life threatening. As the chart below indicates, suicide is the

second leading cause of death for ages 10-24 in NH (as well as nationally). LGBT youth represent a significant high risk sub-group for these youth and young adults as evidenced by the rate of suicide attempts which is 4 times greater for LGB youth and 2 times greater for questioning youth, than that of straight youth according to the US Center for Disease Control. Additionally, suicide attempts by LGB youth and questioning youth are 4 to 6 times more likely to result in injury, poisoning, or overdose that requires treatment from a doctor or nurse, compared to their straight peers. Data has been much more difficult to obtain specific to transgender youth, but all current evidence points to their being at much higher risk.

NH Top Ten Leading Causes of Death 2011-2015											
Age Groups											
Rank	<1	1-4	5-9	10-14	15-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65+	All Ages
1	Congenital Anomalies 44	Unintentional Injury 10	Malignant Neoplasms ---	Malignant Neoplasms 11	Unintentional Injury 262	Unintentional Injury 458	Unintentional Injury 381	Malignant Neoplasms 993	Malignant Neoplasms 2,572	Heart Disease 10,179	Malignant Neoplasms 13,455
2	Short Gestation 41	Congenital Anomalies ---	Unintentional Injury ---	Suicide ---	Suicide 109	Suicide 149	Malignant Neoplasms 207	Heart Disease 570	Heart Disease 1,195	Malignant Neoplasms 9,561	Heart Disease 12,126
3	Maternal Pregnancy Comp. 29	Heart Disease ---	Homicide ---	Unintentional Injury ---	Malignant Neoplasms 20	Malignant Neoplasms 76	Suicide 166	Unintentional Injury 453	Unintentional Injury 355	Chronic Low Respiratory Disease 2,936	Chronic Low Respiratory Disease 3,377
4	Placenta Cord Membranes 17	Homicide ---	Cerebro-vascular ---	Benign Neoplasms ---	Heart Disease 14	Heart Disease 38	Heart Disease 119	Suicide 281	Chronic Low Respiratory Disease 329	Cerebro-vascular 2,082	Unintentional Injury 3,276
5	SIDS 11	Influenza & Pneumonia ---	Congenital Anomalies ---	Congenital Anomalies ---	Homicide 14	Congenital Anomalies 14	Liver Disease 37	Liver Disease 165	Liver Disease 250	Alzheimer's Disease 1,924	Cerebro-vascular 2,319
6	Circulatory System Disease 10	Malignant Neoplasms ---	Heart Disease ---	Heart Disease ---	Cerebro-vascular ---	Homicide 12	Diabetes Mellitus 23	Diabetes Mellitus 106	Diabetes Mellitus 248	Unintentional Injury 1,349	Alzheimer's Disease 1,966
7	Respiratory Distress ---	Benign Neoplasms ---	Suicide ---	Homicide ---	Chronic Low Respiratory Disease ---	Diabetes Mellitus ---	Homicide 17	Chronic Low Respiratory Disease 85	Suicide 203	Diabetes Mellitus 1,083	Diabetes Mellitus 1,473
8	Neurotizing Enterocolitis ---	---	---	---	Benign Neoplasms ---	Chronic Low Respiratory Disease ---	Cerebro-vascular 13	Cerebro-vascular 64	Cerebro-vascular 144	Influenza & Pneumonia 1,022	Influenza & Pneumonia 1,119
9	Neonatal Hemorrhage ---	---	---	---	Congenital Anomalies ---	Liver Disease ---	Chronic Low Respiratory Disease 13	Viral Hepatitis 27	Septicemia 73	Nephritis 782	Suicide 1,060
10	Unintentional Injury ---	---	---	---	Diabetes Mellitus ---	Complicated Pregnancy ---	Two Tied ---	Influenza & Pneumonia 24	Viral Hepatitis 69	Parkinson's Disease 582	Nephritis 869

Terms for Causes of Death

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*Find Help, Find Hope.*

However, more closely related to this bill, and the potential for harm of conversion therapy, is that LGB youth who come from highly rejecting families are 8.4 times as likely to have attempted suicide as LGB peers who reported no or low levels of family rejection.

In addition, during the past week the Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA) released a study showing decreased suicide rates both for GLB teens and for the teen population overall in states that have passed gay marriage.

While this bill specifically provides for freedom of religious expression, the practice of conversion therapy in any form is a danger to the mental health and well-being of youth and young adults.

Please vote HB 587 as ought to pass. Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kenneth Norton". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Kenneth Norton, LICSW  
Executive Director