



February 7, 2025

Honorable Chairman Rick Ladd
House Education Funding Committee
Legislative Office Building Room 205-207
33 N State St., Concord, NH 03301

RE: NAMI NH Support for HB 665

Chairman Ladd and Committee Members:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony. My name is Sam Hawkins, and I am the Public Policy Assistant at NAMI NH, 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 in support of HB 665, relative to eligibility for free school meals.

The social determinants of health are a variety of complex factors that contribute to an individual's health and wellbeing, including their mental health. One key determinant is food security. When our basic needs are not met, it makes it more difficult to maintain all aspects of our health, including our mental health. In this way, food insecurity can lead to stress, anxiety, and other poor health outcomes. Just as food insecurity may affect mental health, one's mental health can also impact their ability to work and afford food for themselves and their families. Research by the Department of Agriculture (USDA) found that adults with a mental health disability are up to five times more likely to live in a household that is food insecure. HB 665 addresses food insecurity for school-aged youth by increasing eligibility for free school meals, improving their mental health and overall wellness.

Through this bill, we have the opportunity to help ensure that youth are able to get and stay well. For these reasons, NAMI NH urges the committee to vote Ought to Pass for HB 665.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Samuel C. Hawkins". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping initial "S".

Samuel C. Hawkins

Find Help, Find Hope.

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