



February 11, 2026

Honorable Chairman MacDonald  
NH House Health, Human Services & Elderly Affairs Committee  
Subject: Testimony in Opposition to HB 1372

Dear Honorable Chair and members of the committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in opposition to HB 1372. For the record my name is Krysten Evans, and I serve as the Director of Policy for ABLE NH, a statewide disability justice organization that works to protect and expand the civil and human rights of people with disabilities across New Hampshire.

House Bill 1372 proposes the creation of yet another commission to study the feasibility of reestablishing a state psychiatric hospital for adults with severe mental illness. Let me be clear. This bill is not a solution. It is a delay tactic dressed up as concern, and it sends a dangerous message about how this state continues to view people with serious mental illness.

New Hampshire does not suffer from a lack of studies. We suffer from a lack of political will.

For years, advocates, providers, law enforcement, families, emergency departments, and people with lived experience have testified repeatedly about the same crisis. People with severe mental illness are languishing in emergency rooms. They are being warehoused in county jails. They are cycling through crisis after crisis because community-based services are underfunded, understaffed, and inaccessible. The legislature has heard this testimony over and over again. Creating another commission does not add new knowledge. It adds more time during which people continue to suffer.

This bill also advances a deeply troubling narrative. It suggests that the answer to our failures is to return to an institutional model rather than invest in community-based care that is proven, effective, and humane. Large psychiatric hospitals have a long and painful history in this country. They are associated with isolation, loss of autonomy, abuse, and neglect. People with disabilities fought for decades to move away from that model, toward care that is integrated, voluntary, and rooted in the community. House Bill 1372 threatens to drag us backwards.

It is also telling that this bill focuses on studying a new facility while failing to

address why our existing systems are collapsing. The problem is not that New Hampshire lacks a building. The problem is that we have chronically underfunded mental health services, workforce supports, housing, and crisis stabilization. We do not need a commission to tell us that staffing shortages exist. We do not need another report to confirm that jails and emergency rooms are inappropriate settings for mental health care. We already know this, and people are paying the price every single day.

There is something profoundly offensive about asking people with disabilities to wait yet again while their lives are put on hold. While this commission studies feasibility, people will continue to sleep on ER floors. Families will continue to beg for help. People will continue to die by suicide. Law enforcement will continue to be asked to fill a role they were never meant to play. That harm is not theoretical. It is happening now.

House Bill 1372 allows legislators to appear responsive without taking responsibility. It allows the state to say it is "studying the issue" while avoiding the hard work of making real investments in community-based mental health care, supportive housing, mobile crisis services, and peer-led supports. That is not leadership. That is abdication.

ABLE NH believes in solutions that center dignity, autonomy, and civil rights. We believe in fully funding the mental health system we already know we need. We believe in listening to people with lived experience instead of commissioning another report about them. We believe New Hampshire can do better than this.

House Bill 1372 is unnecessary, regressive, and harmful in its implications. I urge you to oppose it and instead commit to real, immediate action that reflects the urgency of this crisis and the humanity of the people most affected.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Respectfully submitted,



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