

October 18, 2021

The Honorable Sherman Packard, Speaker
N.H. House of Representatives
State House, Room 311
107 North Main Street
Concord, NH 03301

Re: Safe access to upcoming legislative sessions

Dear Speaker Packard:

On behalf of the hundreds of thousands of Granite State individuals and families impacted by the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, we, the undersigned health providers and advocates, write today to urge you and House leadership to take all necessary steps and precautions to ensure safe public access to the legislative process over the coming session, including enabling the option to testify at committee hearings remotely from outside of the State House.

As you often remind us, the State House is the people's house, and public input and the right to know are critical components of New Hampshire's legislative process. Yet with the COVID-19 pandemic still raging throughout our state, individuals would have to put their own health, and that of their families, friends, neighbors and communities, at risk in order to attend and testify in-person at legislative committee hearings, meetings and sessions. This not only jeopardizes the health and welfare of Granite State residents, including you, your fellow legislators and many of your constituents who face underlying health issues, but it also threatens to deprive the Legislature of critical constituent and stakeholder voices needed to craft responsive and responsible public policy.

Without remote access over videoconferencing or other technology, we, as public health providers and advocates, are unable to safely appear at the State House, and the hundreds of thousands of individuals we represent and serve will be unable to be heard on the many legislative proposals critical to their own health and welfare.

Conversely, as we learned during the 2021 session, videoconferencing effectively provides safe and secure access to legislative proceedings to citizens, health care providers and advocates all across New Hampshire. This maintains the health of your constituents, expands the pool of perspectives and experiences represented at committee hearings, and more fully informs our legislative process. For the health and wellness of our state and its residents, we ask you to adopt a system of virtual access to all House committee hearings, meetings and sessions for the coming legislative session.

We would welcome the opportunity to discuss this matter with you. It is essential to protecting the physical and civic health of our state.

Respectfully,

Borja Alvarez de Toledo, M.Ed, President & CEO
Waypoint (formerly Child and Family Services)

Gina Balkus, Chief Executive Officer
Granite State Home Health & Hospice Association

Heather Carroll, Advocacy Director
N.H. Alliance for Healthy Aging

Jaymie Chagnon, Chair, Board of Directors
N.H. Nutrition Network

Kim Bock, Executive Director
N.H. Coalition of Recovery Residences

Lisa Beaudoin, Executive Director
ABLE-NH

Dianne Castrucci, Executive Director
N.H. Alcohol & Drug Abuse Counselors Association

Lisa Henderson, Executive Director
LeadingAge Maine & New Hampshire

Roland Lamy, Executive Director
N.H. Community Behavioral Health Association

Michele D. Merritt, Esq., President & CEO
New Futures

April Mottram, RPh, Executive Director
N.H. Public Health Association

Kenneth Norton, LICSW, Executive Director
NAMI New Hampshire

Stephanie Patrick, Executive Director
Disability Rights Center – N.H.

Deborah Ritcey, MPA/HA, President & CEO
Granite State Independent Living

Jonathan Routhier, LICSW, MBA, Executive Director
Community Support Network, Inc.

Kerran Vigroux, BS, MPH, Executive Director
N.H. Alcohol and Other Drug Service Providers Association

Brendan W. Williams, M.A., J.D., President & CEO
N.H. Health Care Association

Dawn McKinney, Policy Director
N.H. Legal Assistance

Kim Mohan, Executive Director
N.H. Nurse Practitioner Association

Eldon Munson, Jr., President, Board of Directors
N.H. Association of Residential Care Homes

Cheryle Pacapelli, Project Director
N.H. Recovery Community Center Network

James Potter, Executive Vice President
N.H. Medical Society

Mike Rollo, Director of Government. Relations,
New Hampshire and Vermont
American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network

Kristine E. Stoddard, Senior Director of N.H.
Public Policy
Bi-State Primary Care Association

Steve Wade, President
N.H. Brain Injury Association