

January 13, 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 legislative sessions

Dear Speaker Packard and Honorable Members of the House of Representatives:

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, are writing once again to urge you and House leadership to ensure safe public access to the legislative process by enabling the option to testify at committee hearings remotely from outside the State House.

As you know, the recent House session, held last week at the DoubleTree Hotel in Manchester, has thus far yielded at least two positive COVID cases, with others potentially to follow given the highly contagious nature of the Omicron variant. With infection numbers on the rise and New Hampshire's medical system already stretched thin by Omicron, we believe it is irresponsible to require individuals 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. It not only jeopardizes the health and welfare of Granite State residents, including you and your fellow legislators, as well as many of your constituents who face underlying health issues, but it also deprives the Legislature of critical constituent and stakeholder voices needed to craft responsive and responsible public policy.

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 that allows testimony via videoconferencing technology to all House committee hearings, meetings and sessions for the coming legislative session. 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)

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

Lisa Beaudoin, Executive Director
ABLE-NH

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

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

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

Pamela DiNapoli, PhD, RN, CNL, Executive Director
N.H. Nurses Association

Lisa Henderson, Executive Director
LeadingAge Maine & New Hampshire

Tory Jennison, PhD, RN, President-Elect,
Board of Directors
N.H. Public Health Association

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

Paula MacKinnon, RN, President
N.H. School Nurses Association

Dawn McKinney, Policy Director
N.H. Legal Assistance

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

Eldon Munson, Jr., President, Board of Director
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

Kim Mohan, Executive Director
N.H. Nurse Practitioner 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