

Dear Members of the House Committee on Health Care:

My name is Michael Heinz, and I am an Assistant Professor of Psychiatry at Dartmouth College and a practicing board-certified psychiatrist. I am a researcher in the field of AI and a Major in the US Army Medical Corps.

Given our location at Dartmouth, I treat many patients in both NH and VT.

I am writing to express serious concerns about H.816 and its potential to effectively halt important research on artificial intelligence and mental health in Vermont (as well as neighboring states, given the VT's proximity and the movement of VT/NH residents between the two states).

Although I share what I believe to be H.816's aim of protecting the public from unregulated AI tools for mental health use, I do not believe H.816 accomplishes this aim and is likely to directly work against it.

The bill's broad restrictions on AI-assisted mental health and wellness services would effectively shut down the kind of supervised, IRB-approved research that is essential to understanding how AI can be used safely and effectively.

Paradoxically, these restrictions place the greatest burden on the researchers and developers who are doing the responsible work, subjecting their tools to higher levels of scrutiny and legislative oversight, while leaving unregulated commercial products free to operate unchecked.

**Illinois's enactment of similar restrictive legislation in 2025 has already forced our team to end a research collaboration studying AI and mental health outcomes with colleagues there.** That work, which had the potential to benefit patients and clinicians, was halted not because it was harmful, but because the regulatory framework made it illegal to continue in that state.

New Hampshire recently confronted this same issue with SB 640. After careful study, a legislative workgroup recommended against the bill 11–1 (an important signal that legislators are recognizing the difference between regulating harmful products and restricting important and necessary science).

I respectfully urge the committee to consider amendments (or a rewrite) that distinguish between unregulated commercial AI products and supervised academic research and clinically validated tools, so that Vermont does not inadvertently stifle the science and innovation needed to keep its residents safe.

I would welcome the opportunity to discuss these concerns further. Thank you for your time and consideration.

I recognize there is current activity on this bill happening today in the House. I would welcome the opportunity to discuss these items further by phone if that could be helpful. **My cell is: 303-915-9128.**

Sincerely,

Michael Heinz

**Michael V. Heinz, M.D.**

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