POSITION STATEMENT IN SUPPORT
LD 196: Resolve, To Ensure Access to Community Mental Health Services
Presented to Maine’s Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services

As the state’s largest grassroots mental health advocacy organization, NAMI Maine supports the passage of Resolve, To Ensure Access to Community Mental Health Services. NAMI Maine works closely with the 1 in 4 Mainers impacted by mental illness state-wide and often hears stories from individuals who are seeking help but find themselves coming up against a litany of barriers, such as timely access to quality community mental health services.

Maine is one of the most rural states in the nation, with 61.3% of the state’s population residing in rural areas1. The rural landscape of Maine can make accessible healthcare treatment challenging. Historically low rates of reimbursement for critical community and home-based services delivered to Maine citizens with mental illness have resulted in a shortage of providers and long waitlists for essential services. The shortage of providers is especially true in more rural regions, where tight labor pools make hiring and retention a difficult task, further exacerbated when providers are forced to offer low wages. To illustrate the current conditions, the CEO for Kennebec Behavioral Health, Tom McAdam, stated in 2019 that wait times for MaineCare patients can be 15-30 weeks. Without a robust and accessible community based mental health system, individuals are left with minimal resources, often resulting in their illnesses progressing and requiring a higher, and more costly level of care.

With the current low MaineCare reimbursement rates for mental health services, agencies often struggle to maintain staff levels limiting their ability to serve the full scope of their client needs. By increasing the reimbursement rates for services delivered under MaineCare Sec. 17 and 65 for daily living support services and any home and community-based services provided by behavioral health professionals, the state of Maine will be able to strengthen the ability for the state already in place to better serve communities. While NAMI Maine is aware of the financial situation the state currently faces, we urge the committee to pass LD 196 to ensure access to medication management for Mainer’s seeking help for serious and persistent mental illness.

ABOUT NAMI MAINE: Incorporated in 1984, the National Alliance on Mental Illness, Maine Chapter (NAMI Maine) is the state’s largest grassroots mental health organization. With support from national and regional affiliates, the agency is dedicated to building better lives for everyone impacted by behavioral health concerns. NAMI Maine engages with leaders and community partners at all levels to improve the state’s mental health system through collaboration and education.