

POSITION STATEMENT IN FAVOR

LD 445, Directing the Department of Health and Human Services to Apply for a Waiver from the Federal Government for the Medicaid Limitation on Payment to a Facility with More Than 16 Inpatient Beds for Psychiatric Treatment

Presented to Maine's Standing Committee on Health & Human Services

As the state's largest grassroots mental health advocacy organization, NAMI Maine supports the passage of LD 445 favoring DHHS's applying for the federal waiver of Medicaid limitations on payment to a facility with more than 16 inpatient beds for psychiatric treatment. As Maine continues to struggle navigating the unmet mental health needs of its residents, limiting access of payment to facilities operating with more than 16 psychiatric beds is an unnecessary barrier to providing vital inpatient care for Maine residents.

Since Medicaid's inception in 1965, there has been a restriction on psychiatric facilities, previously referred to as Institutions for Mental Diseases (IMDs), intended to prevent states from transferring the burden of mental health care costs to the federal government and attempting to encourage investment in community-based services. This restriction is known as the IMD Exclusion, limiting Medicaid funding to only facilities that have less than 16 psychiatric treatment beds. With an approved waiver to the IMD Exclusion, Maine would be eligible to receive Medicaid reimbursement for treatment provided at larger facilities, currently inaccessible to many residents.

Outside of the IMD Exclusion, Medicaid provides payment for the cost of medically necessary care; this highlights the disparity in access to care. This discriminatory exclusion has resulted in unequal coverage of mental health treatments. By seeking a waiver from the IMD Exclusion, we put the treatment decision making in the hands of the trained mental health professionals that have evaluated the necessity of an inpatient level of care. Without this waiver, we rely on a nearly 60 year old policy that has left our local hospital emergency rooms filled to capacity, often providing unnecessarily long care to patients awaiting placement in an inpatient facility that Medicaid will approve.

We have the opportunity to ease the burden on our systems of care by accessing a waiver that has been approved in other states, which Maine is equally entitled to.

While this application for an IMD Exclusion waiver will not solve the entirety of the struggles within the mental health system, this is an important step forward to provide timely and appropriate care to patients that have been assessed to need an inpatient level of care. This step allows our overburdened emergency room staff to effectively place patients sooner, locally.

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.*

LEGISLATIVE CONTACT

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POSITIONS & POLICY AGENDA
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