

## POSITION STATEMENT IN SUPPORT

### LD 619: An Act to Ensure Coordination of Care for MaineCare Members

Presented to Maine's Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services  
March 16<sup>th</sup>, 2023

As the state's largest grassroots mental health advocacy organization, NAMI Maine supports the passage of *An Act to Ensure Coordination of Care for MaineCare Members*. 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 to access to care, including transportation.

Maine is one of the most rural states in the nation, with 61.3% of the state's population residing in rural areas. The rural landscape of Maine can make accessible healthcare treatment complicated. Maine also continues to experience transportation barriers, with minimal access to public transportation, creating a significant barrier to seeking treatment and decreasing isolation. By allowing for transportation to programming that is part of an individual's treatment plan, the state will in fact see a positive impact in negating the mental and physical health impacts of isolation. Isolation is linked to higher rates of depression, anxiety and suicide risk. It is also linked to physical health consequences ranging from sleep deprivation to compromised immune systems. There are many treatment options that are reviewed and discussed during the course of treatment with proven health benefits. The lack of transportation options in the state should not be a barrier to individuals engaging in activities and groups that are proven to improve mental health.

As the public health emergency ends, Maine is continuing to grapple with the residual impacts, particularly on the mental wellness of our residents. Because of this, NAMI Maine supports the passage of LD 619 in order to ensure that those who require additional supports and resources are able to access them, regardless of transportation options.

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**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.*

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#### LEGISLATIVE CONTACT

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