

POSITION STATEMENT IN SUPPORT

LD 435 , Resolve, to Ensure the Provision of Medically Necessary Behavioral Health Care Services for Children in Their Homes and Communities

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 the Provisions of Medically Necessary Behavioral Health Care Services for Children in their Homes and Communities*. Over the last two weeks, NAMI Maine and other mental health advocates have attended hearings and work sessions before this committee's esteemed colleagues sitting on the Criminal Justice and Public Safety Committee regarding very similar issues and concerns. We strongly support this resolve, as it shifts the ownership and support for the young people of our state back in the correct system.

Research indicates that as many as 70% of justice involved youth have a diagnosable mental health condition. Limited access to evidence-based treatments often results in many of these young people receiving minimal, if any treatment, until they interface with the criminal justice system. As this committee examines the importance of this bill in ensuring that the children of our state receive mental health services in their homes and communities, please keep in mind that when evidence-based treatments are not delivered in timely and appropriate settings, many of these youth will find themselves receiving services in far more costly or restrictive settings. In the worst of scenarios, suicide has become the second leading cause of death for 10-24 year olds.

According to the CDC, only 20% of children who require behavioral health care services receive them in their home and community, with children in rural communities having lower rates. Prior to the pandemic, Maine has the highest rate of children diagnosed with anxiety and third highest rate of children diagnosed with depression, along with being identified with a critical shortage of providers. As the pandemic continued, the mental health system continued to experience a depletion of services, providers, and treatment options for children. In the spring of 2022, the State of Maine was cited by the Department of Justice due to the lack of available community resources and services for the young people of the state.

NAMI Maine supports the work and initiatives of this committee in ensuring that the future of our state are receiving the care and treatment that we would ensure for any other illness that they may have. The investments of this committee will provide critical resources and allow for the best possible outcomes for our children. Although it may be an additional cost for the state initially, this would save the state future spending in higher and more expensive care in the future.

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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