

## POSITION STATEMENT IN SUPPORT

LD 472: An Act to Support Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinic Projects

Presented to Maine's Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services  
April 5<sup>th</sup>, 2023

As the state's largest grassroots mental health advocacy organization, NAMI Maine strongly supports the passage of LD 472 *An Act to Support Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinic Projects*. NAMI Maine speaks to countless family members and peers living with Severe and Persistent Mental Illness each year, navigating the mental health maze and seeking treatment and support services to maintain stability in the community. These individuals are seeking help but find themselves coming up against a litany of barriers, such as timely access to quality community mental health services.

While 1 in 40 Americans will experience a severe and persistent mental illness across their lifetime, less than half will receive an adequate and effective intervention prior to their illness progressing to the point of meeting the criteria for a disability. On average, individuals wait ten years from the time they begin experiencing mental health symptoms to the time they first seek help. While stigma plays a significant role in the delay of treatment, issues like access to care, cost of care, and quality of care are other barriers. 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. Individuals admitted to the hospital due to severe and persistent mental illness are far more likely to be readmitted within a month's time if they do not receive appropriate community-based services. The average cost of readmission due to a mood disorder is \$7,200. It is currently estimated that untreated or undertreated mental health disorders cost the nation \$300 billion a year. These numbers are staggering to think of the impact on the state and national economy. Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinics are an evidence-based practice to support individuals with significant needs in the community and reduce hospitalization. One clinic in Missouri reported a 66% decrease in crisis intervention services, and 85% of those referred to hospitalization were diverted to more cost-effective community services. A CCBHC in Oregon that partnered with a local jail reported a cost savings of \$2.5 million dollars in prison costs.

NAMI Maine supports the passage of LD 472 to support one in four Mainers with a mental health diagnosis in the hopes of building a robust and accessible mental health system based on evidence-based practices. As we look to save money within the system, it is essential to note that although these programs may cost more initially, they have been proven to decrease costs over time.

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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.*

## LEGISLATIVE CONTACT

Hannah Longley, LCSW, Director of Community Programs  
(207) 622-5767 | [HannahL@namimaine.org](mailto:HannahL@namimaine.org)

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