

## POSITION STATEMENT NEITHER FOR NOR AGAINST

### LD 1719: An Act to Establish Substance Use Disorder Treatment Centers

#### Presented to Maine's Joint Standing Committee on HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

As the state's largest grassroots mental health advocacy organization, NAMI Maine stands neither for nor against LD 1719: An Act to Establish Substance Use Disorder Treatment Centers. We strongly and enthusiastically support the development of more options supporting people to address their substance use needs and break the cycle of addiction in their lives but recognize that substance use without an underlying mental health need is rarely the case. For several decades we have acknowledged that mental health needs and a substance use disorder go hand in hand. We have called them co-occurring conditions and framed it as dual diagnosis; we have acknowledged the need for wholistic treatment that addresses the whole person. Research indicates that 43% of people in substance use treatment for non-medical use of opioid pain killers have a diagnosis or symptom of a mental health condition, particularly depression or anxiety. The incidence is even higher for adolescents in substance use treatment. Yet once again we are establishing programs to support a person with an acknowledged substance use disorder without integrating co-occurring treatment of mental health needs.

Over many years and through the stories of countless Maine citizens, NAMI Maine staff have heard the stories and have acted to advocate for people denied needed mental health services due to an active substance use disorder or denied substance use treatment because their mental health needs were too great and not in control. Which came first, the chicken or the egg? Does someone develop a substance use problem from self-medicating their undiagnosed mental health needs, or develop a mental health disorder because of their substance use patterns? The reality is that it is often both walking the path through their lives together. NAMI Maine strongly supports programming designed to address co-occurring conditions.

**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.*