

LD 1975: An Act to Implement a Statewide Public Health Response to Substance Use and Amend the Laws Governing Scheduled Drugs

Presented to the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services

NAMI Maine strongly endorses LD1975: *An Act to Implement a Statewide Public Health Response to Substance Use and Amend the Laws Governing Scheduled Drugs*. NAMI Maine has been advocating for increased access to receiving centers to support individuals who are experiencing a mental health or substance use crisis for many years. According to the World Population Review, Maine rates as the eighth highest percentage of individuals living with a behavioral health diagnosis. With the national average being one in five adults, Maine is approximately one in four. As the behavioral health system has been depleted, hospitals and the criminal justice system has emerged as a large provider of mental health substance use treatments.

NAMI Maine collects data from police departments who participate in Crisis Intervention Teams. Of the 51 departments that submit data, it was reported that in 2023 they collectively transported 2,253 individuals to either an emergency room voluntarily or to local crisis resources due to either a mental health or substance use challenge. As the year just recently closed, it is anticipated that these numbers will increase. By implementing receiving centers that are fully funded and staffed, it is likely that the number of individuals who are transported to the emergency departments will decrease by at least half. This modality of crisis stabilization has been found to be the emerging best practice, assisting the overtaxed and inappropriately equipped hospital and criminal justice systems with alternative treatment, demonstrates more positive outcomes for the members of the communities, as well as being found to be cost effective. Galveston, TX reported that the initial year their crisis receiving or stabilization center was opened, they saved roughly \$1 million and it was found that after opening centers in St. Paul and Minneapolis, MN the net benefit was \$2.16 for every \$1 invested into the system. These studies and analysis were all completed nearly 10 years ago, meaning that they have most likely increased in cost saving measures for the state.

More people are seeking treatment and support for mental health at a time when we are experiencing a reduction in mental health providers. This surge in need coincided with significant restrictions on access to care, ultimately resulting in higher, more costly levels of care that have been shown through research to have less positive outcomes for those seeking support. Because of this, NAMI Maine supports the passage of LD 1975.

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, Clinical Director of
Advocacy and Crisis Intervention
(207) 622-5767 □ HannahL@namimaine.org

POSITIONS & POLICY AGENDA

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