

POSITION STATEMENT IN SUPPORT**LD 107: An Act to Require Health Insurance Coverage for Biomarker Testing****Presented to the Joint Standing Committee on Health Coverage, Insurance and Financial Services**

As the state's largest grassroots mental health advocacy organization, NAMI Maine supports the passage of *An Act to Require Health Insurance Coverage for Biomarker Testing*. NAMI Maine represents the 1 in 4 Mainers who struggle with mental health challenges each year. Mental Illness is a complex journey, with individuals waiting an average of 10 years from the onset of symptoms until they seek treatment. Once an individual has stepped forward to seek treatment, biomarker testing can assist in stabilizing and maintaining their illness.

According to the World Health Organization, suffering from a serious mental illness has been found to reduce life expectancy anywhere from 13-32 years, depending on location and access to services. In most western countries, WHO states that mental illness is the leading cause of disability, as well as accounting for 30-40% of sick days. Currently, suicide is the second leading cause of death for 10-24-year-olds, with estimates of 130 suicide deaths occurring daily in the United States. Often, individuals seeking treatment must undergo a lengthy assessment process and then participate in various trials of medications based on symptom presentation, as opposed to testing and results as with other medical conditions.

Biomarker testing allows for an additional and critical tool for individuals struggling with their mental health, along with their providers. Unlike other illnesses, where scans and imaging can provide a concrete diagnosis and treatment regime, mental health conditions are more nuanced and, at times, can take multiple attempts to diagnose and treat accurately. During this time, many individuals can struggle to maintain employment, education, relationships, and, at times, their ability to live. Approximately 10 years ago, biomarker research was being completed within trial studies. An individual relayed their story of being in college during this time, struggling with severe depression and overwhelming hopelessness due to struggles to treat and stabilize their symptoms. After trying eight different medications and the individual attempting suicide, their doctor recommended them for a trial regarding biomarkers, which they now attribute to saving their life. The individual has since completed college, as well as their master's program, and is living a fulfilling life.

NAMI Maine urges you to consider the life-changing and lifesaving work biomarker testing has been demonstrated to have. This committee can assist in saving lives and improving quality for so many. Because of this, NAMI Maine strongly urges the passage of LD 107, An Act to Require Health Insurance Coverage for Biomarker Testing.

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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