

POSITION STATEMENT IN SUPPORT**LD 1100, An Act to Clarify the Requirements for Accessing Nonformulary Drugs and Drugs Used to Treat Serious Mental Illness****Presented to Maine's 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 Clarify the Requirements for Accessing Nonformulary Drugs and Drugs Used to Treat Serious Mental Illness*. Life with a mental illness, for one in four Mainers, can be a complex and difficult journey, full of significant barriers and obstacles. Mental illness has roots in multiple biological and experiential factors, resulting in the need for a provider/patient-driven response that is dictated on an individual basis. According to national statistics, there is an 11-year gap between the onset of symptoms and when an individual seeks treatment. Additionally, 30-40% of individuals cite the cost of care as the primary barrier to treatment. In the most catastrophic situations, untreated mental health challenges can result in loss of work and relationships, lasting cognitive impacts, homelessness, incarceration, hospitalization, and even suicide.

Over the last year, NAMI Maine's Helpline has received over 990 calls from individuals across the state. There has been an increase in calls regarding individuals reporting struggles in accessing their mental health medications. One individual reported being well-employed and having private insurance, which they thought should ease the difficulties in accessing care. They explained to me that they had been prescribed medications to manage their mental health symptoms for multiple years; however, in the last year, they have struggled in maintaining stability in their treatment. They reported that their primary pharmacy will not have the correct medications in stock at the time they are due for a refill, which insurance companies often restrict to 30-day supplies at a time. The individual then reported that they are faced with either contacting their prescriber to alter the prescription and/or calling around to various pharmacies. They noted that, due to medications being considered scheduled drugs, pharmacies will not provide a direct answer; therefore, the individual must drive to the pharmacy, confirm that the medications are present, and then contact their prescriber to submit their prescription at the current pharmacy. Although this does not occur every month, it happened frequently enough that they contacted our agency due to concerns for themselves, as well as others across the state.

Although this legislation will not address the concerns regarding medication shortages in the state, it begins to ease the burden on those who have already overcome significant hurdles in accessing treatment and stabilizing their symptoms. Because of this, we urge the committee to pass LD 1100 to reduce the barriers that individuals face in seeking to maintain the stability of their treatment.

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.

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POSITIONS & POLICY AGENDA
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