

**POSITION STATEMENT IN SUPPORT****LD 1631: Resolve, to Implement the Recommendations of the Stakeholder Group to Address Child Stay Times in Hospital Emergency Departments**

Presented to Maine's Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services

As the state's largest grassroots mental health advocacy organization, NAMI Maine supports the passage of LD 1631. NAMI Maine works closely with the 1 in 4 Mainers impacted by mental illness state-wide and often hears stories from individuals who are seeking help but find themselves coming up against a litany of barriers, such as timely access to quality community mental health services, resulting in young people languishing in emergency departments. As such, NAMI Maine participated in the stakeholder group convened in order to address these concerns and participate in problem-solving how to support young people and their families.

This committee has grappled with concerns and challenges regarding long waitlists, concerns regarding levels of care, and individuals languishing at varying levels of care. According to reports in recent years, there has been a drastic increase in the number of young people being seen in emergency rooms due to experiencing a mental health crisis. It has also been highlighted that there are significant disparities in the time that young people wait in emergency rooms for a mental health crisis vs a physical health crisis or ailment. Young people who remain in emergency rooms for extended periods of time are reported to have a significant increase in the symptoms that initially precipitated their visit, such as depression, anxiety, self-injury, suicidal ideation, as well as behavioral challenges.<sup>1</sup> Additionally, it has been found that young people who are seen and remain in emergency rooms for extended stays receive minimal intervention and treatment, rarely by a trained mental health professional, compared to young people who are seen and held in emergency rooms awaiting placement for physical health conditions.<sup>2</sup>

The State of Maine has entered into a settlement agreement with the Department of Justice regarding many concerns regarding the lack of resources and support available to young people with behavioral health challenges in the state. This resolve attempts to address some of the concerns and begins to build a transparent system to assist with supporting the future of Maine.

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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.*

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<sup>1</sup> [Behavioral Health Emergency Room Dilemma: Children Waiting in Crisis - DCHA](#)

<sup>2</sup> [Emergency Department Use by Children and Youth with Mental Health Conditions: A Health Equity Agenda - BMC](#)

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