

## POSITION STATEMENT IN SUPPORT

### LD 155, An Act Regarding Community-based Services for Youth Involved in the Juvenile Justice System

#### Presented to Maine's Joint Standing Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety

As the state's largest grassroots mental health advocacy organization, NAMI Maine supports the passage of *An Act Regarding Community-based Services for Youth Involved in the Juvenile Justice System*. Young people involved in the juvenile justice system disproportionately represent juveniles with high levels of trauma, emerging mental health challenges, and inadequate access to resources and supports. When NAMI Maine was first introduced to this committee, there was an apology for the number of mental health issues that this committee would face. This is one such bill.

According to FBI statistics, 90% of justice involved youth have experienced at least one traumatic event, with 30% of justice involved youth meeting criteria for posttraumatic stress disorder. Research indicates that as many as 70% of justice involved youth have a diagnosable mental health condition, with 20% of young people later diagnosed with a severe and persistent mental illness will have their first interaction with a formal system being the criminal justice system. Limited access to evidence-based treatments often results in many of these young people receiving minimal, if any treatment, until they interface with the criminal justice system.

NAMI Maine appreciates that this is shifting the burden of the treatment and needs of the mental health system to the criminal justice system. However, the unfortunate reality is that as the funding is often cut in the mental health system, the criminal justice system becomes the catch all. Due to these issues, utilizing best practices and treatment modalities is imperative in order to ensure that the root cause of the concerns are being addressed, is a far more proactive and forward thinking approach. The earlier we are able to intervene and provide appropriate resources and supports, the more positive outcomes we are able to see in the lives of the young people in our state.

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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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#### LEGISLATIVE CONTACT

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**POSITIONS & POLICY AGENDA**  
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