

POSITION STATEMENT IN SUPPORT

LD 1165: An Act to Enhance Cost Savings to Consumers of Prescription Drugs

Presented to Maine's Joint Standing Committee on Health Coverage, Insurance and Financial Services
April 6th, 2023

As the state's largest grassroots mental health advocacy organization, NAMI Maine supports the passage of LD 1165 *An Act to Enhance Cost Savings to Consumers of Prescription Drugs*. 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. Prior to COVID-19, the World Health Organization identified anxiety and depression as the leading cause of the world's economic loss. These are also the two most common diagnoses in the nation, as well as our state. Since the onset of COVID-19, the number of individuals being diagnosed and treated for anxiety and depression has significantly increased. In the most catastrophic situations, untreated depression and anxiety can result in loss of work and relationships, lasting cognitive impacts, homelessness, incarceration, hospitalization, and even suicide.

Although preferred medication policies have been put into place by insurance companies as a cost-saving measure, it complicates treatment decisions that should not have to factor in financial decisions. Insurance companies utilize rebates from pharmaceutical companies to ensure that their medications fall within a preferred tier system, resulting in those decisions that are required to be made by the provider and patient that fall within the pre-selected choices based on insurance companies' finances. Due to the sensitive nature of individual biological and genetics, making medication decisions must be thoughtful. When there is a cost-to-saving measure in place, individuals who are both paying for their insurance coverage and selecting medications based on the lists that are provided to them should be receiving the benefits of the rebates that are being provided, as they are the ones who are utilizing their already purchased services.

As it stands now, the stigma and barriers surrounding mental illness results in individuals waiting an average of 10 years to seek treatment. Once an individual is able to step forward to seek treatment, utilizing their purchased services, they should benefit from the cost savings measures that have been put in place. We ask this committee to ensure that these barriers are removed to support the one in four Mainers living with a mental health diagnosis.

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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