

POSITION STATEMENT IN SUPPORT

LD 997 Resolve, to Reduce Workforce Barriers for Mental Health Professionals in Maine

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 *Resolve, to Reduce Workforce Barriers for Mental Health Professionals in Maine*. NAMI Maine advocates strongly to provide mental health services to the 1 in 4 Mainers who are affected by a mental health challenge. We also support work to increase the capabilities of the state to meet the needs of all community members.

Prior to the occurrence of COVID-19, Maine was unfortunately already recognized nationally as having a critical shortage of mental health providers. Since the onset of the pandemic, the shortage has grown. The Health Resources and Services Administration, as well as Mental Health America, identify Maine as having significant deficits in the mental health workforce at many levels. By providing an alteration to the guidelines, we will be able to welcome many of our young people back to the state after receiving degrees in the mental health field. It will allow students who attended private institutions to join the mental health field with minimal barriers. Although it is imperative, we ensure that professionals working with our most vulnerable individuals are appropriately trained and qualified, the current qualifications and certifications create undue barriers to those who may want to enter the field.

NAMI Maine recommends that this committee continues to increase the opportunities and the pathways into the mental health field. Maine has developed strong technical programs, both within the community college system, as well as the high school training pathways. As a state, we have increased the abilities for young people to achieve EMS certifications, Certified Nurses Assistants training, as well as other state certification trainings. Providing mental health training opportunities for certifications would match the mental health field with other professions. Additionally, developing a pathway for training within technical schools would increase the understanding and abilities of the young people of our state in initiating professional work within this field and establishing a future for an ever-depleting career choice.

NAMI Maine supports the work and initiatives of this committee in ensuring that critical resources and services are provided throughout the state. The creation of a robust workforce and reducing the barriers to working in a rewarding, although challenging field, will increase the ability to support our communities.

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

www.namimaine.org/advocacy