

POSITION STATEMENT IN SUPPORT

LD 791 An Act Regarding Children with Behavioral Health Needs Awaiting Placement in Residential Care Facilities

As the state's largest grassroots mental health advocacy organization, NAMI Maine supports the passage of LD 791, An Act Regarding Children with Behavioral Health Needs Awaiting Placement in Residential Care Facilities. NAMI Maine supports the delivery of timely, evidence-based treatment at an appropriate level of care within a young person's community and surrounded by their support whenever possible. We do recognize that there are times when children need a higher level of care and often hear the stories of parents fighting to access the resources that their children need.

Maine has just entered into a settlement agreement with the Department of Justice regarding the over-institutionalization of our young people, particularly those with complex behavioral health needs. The DOJ identified that young people are left to languish within emergency departments while awaiting out-of-home or residential placement. We have all heard the stories are young people who remain in emergency rooms, awaiting placement and treatment for their behavioral health challenges, for extended periods of time. During these times, young people are receiving minimal interventions and support, often resulting in further deteriorating behavioral health presentations. Emergency departments are not equipped or able to provide stabilization or treatment for young people who are struggling. If we were to hear of a child requiring intensive medical treatment for diabetes or cancer diagnoses, we would be incensed as a state, yet we deem it acceptable for children with the most acute behavioral health challenges.

Additionally, data is critical in informed decision and policy making. As discussions regarding systemic issues continue and many attempts to problem solve the challenges to meet the needs of some of our most vulnerable young people, we must be basing it off information and data collected. There are many assumptions and well-intended guesses regarding the unmet needs that result in young people languishing in emergency rooms. However, without a better understanding and more concrete information, we could all continuously be missing root causes in our well-intended actions.

The young people of the State of Maine deserve to receive timely treatment. Because of this, NAMI Maine supports the passage of LD 791 and would encourage the committee to support our most vulnerable young people in accessing prompt and effective behavioral health treatment during their most acute times of need.

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

Hannah Longley, LCSW, Director of Advocacy and
Crisis Intervention
(207) 622-5767 ○ HannahL@namimaine.org

POSITIONS & POLICY AGENDA
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