

POSITION STATEMENT IN SUPPORT

LD 748 An Act to Increase Bridging Rental Assistance Program Housing Voucher Funding to Reduce the Current Partial Waiting List and Increase Housing Vouchers for Persons Living with Mental Health Challenges

As the state's largest grassroots mental health advocacy organization, NAMI Maine strongly supports the passage of *An Act to Increase Bridging Rental Assistance Program Housing Voucher Funding to Reduce the Current Partial Waiting List and Increase Housing Vouchers for Persons Living with Mental Health Challenges*. NAMI Maine speaks to countless family members and peers living with mental health challenges each year, navigating the complex mental health system and seeking treatment and support services to maintain stability in the community with the ever-increasing housing crisis ensuing across the state. It is estimated that one-third of individuals who are unhoused experience a severe and persistent mental illness, primarily diagnoses of schizophrenia and bipolar disorder.

While 1 in 40 Americans will experience a severe and persistent mental illness across their lifetime, less than half will receive adequate and effective intervention before their illness progresses to the point of meeting the criteria for a disability. Sadly, 20% of young people who develop a severe and persistent mental illness receive their first formal intervention during an encounter with law enforcement. People who are admitted to the hospital due to severe and persistent mental illness are far more likely to be readmitted within a month if they do not receive appropriate community-based services and housing assistance. The average cost of readmission due to a mood disorder is \$7,100. These numbers are staggering to think of the impact on the state and national economy. Because of the significant link, a model of Housing First is emerging as the best practice. By providing safe and stable housing, individuals can engage in consistent treatment and make progress in stabilizing their behavioral health challenges.

NAMI Maine acknowledges that the State of Maine occasionally faces challenging fiscal conditions. However, based on the research, providing stable and safe housing will enable the state to offer cost-effective and life-changing services. Because of this, NAMI Maine urges the committee to pass LD 748.

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 Community Programs
(207) 622-5767 ○ HannahL@namimaine.org

POSITIONS & POLICY AGENDA
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