

## POSITION STATEMENT IN SUPPORT

### **LD 674: An Act to Support Early Intervention and Treatment of Psychotic Disorders** 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 *An Act to Support Early Intervention and Treatment of Psychotic Disorders*. Maine has led the field in the development and implementation of evidence-based, early intervention programming for young people developing a severe and persistent mental illness. As other states have adopted the model, Maine has fallen behind in the expansion of this proven service. The programming that would be offered under this bill would be both lifesaving, as well as life changing for those who would utilize it.

While 1 in 40 Americans will experience a severe and persistent mental illness across their lifetime, less than half will receive an adequate and effective intervention prior to their illness progressing to the point of meeting criteria for a disability. Psychosis typically emerges during late adolescent and early adulthood, which is a critical time period in which education and vocational skills are often developed and honed to assist with the tremendous transition into independent adulthood. By providing proactive and early interventions, individuals will have the skills and tools to successfully make this transition. Early intervention has been found effective in assisting in long term recovery, greater educational and vocational achievements, as well as decreasing the risk of developing a substance use disorder or involvement in the criminal justice system. Sadly 20% of young people who develop a severe and persistent mental illness receive their first formal intervention during an encounter with law enforcement. Early intervention assists in providing services necessary to support the young person through their illness and treat it effectively, increasing the likelihood of positive outcomes. NAMI Maine hears from individuals and their family members frequently, seeking out treatment for a severe and persistent mental illness. Sadly, there is some joy when we find that the individual is residing in the Portland area and able to access the PIER program. We owe it to individuals who live in the other parts of our great state to provide the same standard of care and treatment availability as is found in Portland.

NAMI Maine understands that the State of Maine is in difficult fiscal position during these times. However, providing early intervention is a cost saving measure. The average cost of an inpatient hospitalization for an individual experiencing a severe and persistent mental illness is between \$20,000-24,000. Early intervention and treatment has been found to decrease hospitalization and costly involvement with the criminal justice system, as well as increase the capacity for independent and fulfilling lives, decreasing the necessity of far more expensive interventions and treatments later in life, once the illness has progressed greater. We would not question early intervention measures as it relates to physical health conditions such as cancer, heart disease, or diabetes; we should not question early intervention in mental illness either.

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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*

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## LEGISLATIVE CONTACT

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**POSITIONS & POLICY AGENDA**  
[www.namimaine.org/advocacy](http://www.namimaine.org/advocacy)

*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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