

POSITION STATEMENT IN SUPPORT

LD 1147: Resolve, To Enhance Access to Medication Management for Individuals with Serious and Persistent Mental Illness

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 Enhance Access to Medication Management for Individuals with Serious and Persistent Mental Illness*. NAMI Maine works closely with the 1 in 4 Mainers impacted by mental illness state-wide and often hears stories from individuals who are seeking help but find themselves coming up against a litany of barriers, such as medication management.

Psychotropic medications have changed the lives of millions of individuals affected by mental illness over the course of the last 70 years. This course of treatment has irrefutable evidence demonstrating its effectiveness. However, medications only work when individuals are able to adhere to the structured treatment plans outlined by providers. An effective way to maintain the treatment plan is the development of a trusting and therapeutic relationship with their provider. Providers struggle to maintain such a relationship due to the financial burden of the current reimbursement rate. Low levels of, or inconsistent adherence to, prescribed medications drastically impacts the effectiveness of health care services, adds to disease burden, and leads to poorer long-term health outcomesⁱ. This often results in more costly outcomes due to the need of higher levels of care being sought for treatment, or tragically, the loss of life due to suicide. Maine is one of the most rural states in the nation, with 61.3% of the state's population residing in rural areasⁱⁱ. The rural landscape of Maine can make accessible healthcare treatment even more complicated. On top of the shortage of providers for services distributed throughout the state, the mental health care system experiences low reimbursement rates which creates long wait times for individuals seeking treatment from available providers. This also creates limitations on providers in their ability to regularly meeting with and develop a therapeutic relationship. To illustrate the current conditions, the CEO for Kennebec Behavioral Health, Tom McAdam, stated in 2019 that wait times for MaineCare patients can be 15-30 weeks.

With the current reimbursement rates for medication management set, agencies are often put in a precarious financial position that limits their ability to serve the full scope of their clientele's needs. While NAMI Maine is aware of the financial situation the state currently faces, we urge the committee to pass LD 1147 to ensure access to medication management for Mainers seeking help for serious and persistent mental illness.

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

ⁱ <https://www.thenationalcouncil.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/medication-nonadherence-082918.pdf?daf=375ateTbd56>

ⁱⁱ <https://bangordailynews.com/2012/03/26/news/census-maine-most-rural-state-in-2010-as-urban-centers-grow-nationwide/>

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