

POSITION STATEMENT IN SUPPORT

LD 582: An Act To Support the Fidelity and Sustainability of Assertive Community Treatment

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 the Fidelity and Sustainability of Assertive Community Treatment*. NAMI Maine hears from countless family members and peers living with a Severe and Persistent Mental Illness each week seeking out services to best maintain treatment and stability in the community.

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. Sadly 20% of young people who develop a severe and persistent mental illness receive their first formal intervention during an encounter with law enforcement. Patients who are admitted to the hospital due to severe and persistent mental illness are far more likely to be readmitted within a month's time if they do not receive appropriate community based services. The average cost of readmission due to a mood disorder is \$7,100. It is currently estimated that the cost of untreated or undertreated mental health disorders costs the nation \$3 billion a year. These numbers are staggering to think of the impact on the state and national economy.

Over the last 15-20 years, ACT services have received funding cuts which have resulted in an evidence based treatment being delivered on a sub-standard funding scaling. As a result, the services being delivered have had to be altered in order to accommodate the budget it has received. Although ACT is still recognized as an evidence based program, the services being delivered are not in line with what is best practice. The result has been increased interactions of ACT members with crisis services and law enforcement. Prior to the services receiving funding cuts, ACT Teams would respond in the community on nights and weekends, often eliminating the need for higher level, and more costly services, to become involved. Although the ACT teams strive to deliver the best possible services, without adequate funding they are not able to deliver to the level that many require.

NAMI Maine understands that the State of Maine is in difficult fiscal position during these times. However, as the ACT funding has been decreased over the years, members of the ACT have required higher levels of care, resulting in greater accrued costs to the state. We do not question medical best practice measures as it relates to physical health conditions such as cancer, heart disease, or diabetes; we should not question these interventions as it relates to severe mental illness either.

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
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