

POSITION STATEMENT IN SUPPORT

LD 1470: Resolve, Regarding Reimbursement for Providing Inpatient Care to Individuals with Acute Mental Health Care Needs

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, Regarding Reimbursement for Providing Inpatient Care to Individuals with Acute Mental Health Care Needs*. NAMI Maine works closely with the 1 in 4 Mainers impacted by mental illness state-wide and hears stories from individuals who are seeking help, often from those experiencing acute crises with safety concerns, only to find that they will have to wait extended periods of time often in emergency rooms. The extension of MaineCare benefits in 2019 opened the door for thousands of residents to access mental health treatment in a capacity never seen, which illuminated the demand for such services. As the pandemic has continued, it has also exacerbated and increased the risk that Mainers will experience acute crises with safety concerns. Many individuals however continue to not meet MaineCare eligibility and have lost insurance coverage due to loss of employment.

According to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's 2015 report only 54.9% of Mainers aged 18 and older with mental illness receive any form of treatment from either private or public providers, meaning services are not reaching 45.1% of the population¹. According to the National Behavioral Health Council, individuals wait on average 10 years before seeking treatment for a mental health challenge, often only seeking care when the symptoms have reached a critical and sometimes deadly point of impact. Once an individual has overcome the barriers and seeks treatment, it is imperative that they receive the necessary resources without fear that they will then face catastrophic financial impacts, causing further stress. It is also important that hospitals continue to be able to deliver the necessary services and supports in order to stabilize each individual. The pandemic has evolved into not only a health crisis, but also a mental health crisis that requires immediate action.

While NAMI Maine is aware of the financial situation the state currently faces, we urge the committee to pass LD 1470 to ensure access to care for those who are experiencing the most acute symptoms. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), prior to the onset of the pandemic, mental health symptoms were the leading cause of economic loss in the world. By investing in appropriate and proper care, particularly for the most vulnerable and uninsured, this committee will be investing in the citizens and workers of Maine.

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.rtor.org/directory/mental-health-maine/>

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