



November 10, 2025

Senator John Velis

Joint Committee on Mental Health, Substance
Use, and Recovery

Room 513

24 Beacon St

Boston, MA 02133

Representative Mindy Domb

Joint Committee on Mental Health, Substance
Use, and Recovery

Room 33

24 Beacon St

Boston, MA 02133

**Re: H.2193/S.1394 An Act to ensure efficient and effective implementation of the
Roadmap for Behavioral Health Reform / An Act ensuring efficient and effective
implementation of behavioral health reform**

Dear Chair Velis, Chair Domb, and the Honorable Members of the Committee,

On behalf of the National Alliance on Mental Illness of Massachusetts (NAMI Mass), I write to express our strong support for H.2193/S.1394 *An Act to ensure efficient and effective implementation of the Roadmap for Behavioral Health Reform / An Act ensuring efficient and effective implementation of behavioral health reform*.

NAMI Mass is a grassroots nonprofit organization made up of individuals with mental health conditions, their families, and caregivers. Our mission is to support all individuals, families, and communities across the Commonwealth whose lives are affected by mental health challenges. We center the voices of people with lived experience and draw on their insight to shape our priorities, policy agenda, and programs. Our goal is to help create communities that promote health, advance justice, and prevent both physical and psychological distress.

The Roadmap for Behavioral Health Reform, launched in 2021 and implemented in 2023, serves as a blueprint for making Massachusetts' behavioral health system more equitable, effective, and accessible. Developed through extensive listening sessions and feedback from nearly 700 individuals, families, providers, and other stakeholders, the Roadmap introduced a wide range of reforms designed to expand access to care¹. These include improving access to outpatient assessment and treatment, integrating behavioral health into primary care, and strengthening community-based alternatives to emergency or crisis services.

¹ Massachusetts Department of Mental Health. (n.d.). *Roadmap for Behavioral Health Reform*.
<https://www.mass.gov/roadmap-for-behavioral-health-reform>

Key elements of the Roadmap include:

- **The Behavioral Health Helpline (BHHL):** A free helpline available to all Massachusetts residents 24/7/365, that connects them to mental health and substance use services.²
- **Community Behavioral Health Centers (CBHCs):** Provide a wide range of integrated community-based mental health and substance use services. There are 27 locations located across the state and offer 24/7/365 behavioral health crisis services. Additionally, they provide urgent and routine mental health and substance use care.³
- **Behavioral Health Urgent Care Providers:** Offer same or next day evaluations, psychopharmacology appointments and substance use medication evaluation within 72 hours of an initial evaluation, and all other treatment appointments. There are 72 urgent care providers across the state.⁴

The need for timely and accessible mental healthcare is pressing in Massachusetts. Approximately 1,155,000 adults in the Commonwealth live with a mental health condition⁵, and 363,000 Massachusetts adults do not receive needed mental health care. These numbers are not just statistics but represent real individuals and families struggling to find support. Addressing these gaps requires a unified, strategic approach to behavioral healthcare.

Additionally, while Massachusetts has made a lot of progress since the inception of the Roadmap, implementation has been inconsistent across CBHCs, across different services, and across patient populations. There have been two reports issued since the launch of the Roadmap that highlight opportunities for improvement. The first was “Crisis Services in the Commonwealth” by the Community Policing and Behavioral Health Advisory Council⁶. This report highlighted the lack of coordination across multiple state agencies responsible for health crisis response, as well as the lack of data and transparency for behavioral health responses.⁷

The second report, by the Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts Foundation, is entitled “Massachusetts Roadmap for Behavioral Health Reform: Overview and Implementation Update.”⁸ They echoed the same issue of state agencies’ lack of collaboration, stating, “Absent

² *Ibid.*

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ National Alliance on Mental Illness of Massachusetts. (2023, July). *Mental health in Massachusetts: State fact sheet*. <https://www.nami.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/MassachusettsStateFactSheet.pdf>

⁶ *MA Crisis System Report FINAL-2023*. Massachusetts Association for Mental Health, 2023, www.mamh-web.files.svdcn.com/production/files/MA-Crisis-System-Report_FINAL-2023.pdf

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ *Massachusetts Roadmap for Behavioral Health Reform: Overview and Implementation Update*. Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts Foundation, 8 Aug. 2024,

strong coordination across these entities [MassHealth, Department of Mental Health (DMH), Department of Public Health (DPH), Division of Insurance (DOI), Executive Office of Public Safety and Security (EOPSS)], there is a risk that consumers and providers will face inconsistent or confusing policy guidance, feel mistrust, face barriers providing or accessing services, and, overall, find that resources are not being used effectively.”⁹ The report additionally noted that the state needs to collect more feedback on Roadmap implementation from the community.

H.2193/S.1394 builds on the foundation of the Roadmap by ensuring better coordination and alignment across the behavioral health system. The bill directs the Secretary of the Executive Office of Health and Human Services (EOHHS) to oversee and coordinate activities that support the effective and efficient implementation of the Roadmap. This includes developing a comprehensive biennial strategic plan, improving coordination across EOHHS agencies, and implementing public awareness and feedback initiatives to inform ongoing progress.

Importantly, these reforms aim to expand access to community-based treatment options that are timely, culturally responsive, and tailored to individual needs. Community-based services—whether clinical or peer-run, in-person or virtual—offer compassionate care close to home. They reduce reliance on emergency departments, decrease stigma, and foster long-term connections between individuals and local providers, which are essential to sustained recovery¹⁰.

Additionally, the bill promotes transparency and accountability by requiring the Health Policy Commission to evaluate the financial sustainability of Roadmap services and identify opportunities for improvement. This transparency is vital for individuals and families affected by mental health conditions, as well as for providers and advocates, ensuring that all stakeholders can participate in monitoring and strengthening the behavioral health system we depend on.

It is critical that the Commonwealth does not lose momentum on the progress we have made toward improving our behavioral health care system, because the need remains urgent. Sustained leadership and coordination are essential to ensure that every resident can access timely, high-quality, and culturally responsive care. By continuing to invest in and strengthen the Roadmap’s implementation, Massachusetts can fulfill its commitment to building a behavioral health system that truly meets the needs of all communities.

I urge you to report favorably on H.2193/S.2193 so that we can continue working towards a future where every Bay Stater has access to the mental health care they need, when they need it.

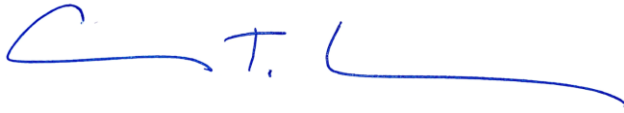
www.bluecrossmafoundation.org/publication/massachusetts-roadmap-behavioral-health-reform-overview-and-implementation-update

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ Kearns, M., Muldoon, O. T., Msetfi, R. M., & Surgenor, P. W. G. (2018). The impact of community-based mental health service provision on stigma and attitudes towards professional help-seeking. *Journal of Mental Health*, 28(3), 289–295. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09638237.2018.1521928>

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'E.T. L', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Eliza T. Williamson
Executive Director, NAMI Massachusetts
331 Montvale Ave
Suite 200
Woburn, MA 01801