



## Massachusetts

November 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2025

The Honorable Senator John C. Velis, Chair  
Joint Committee on Mental Health, Substance Use and Recovery  
State House, Room 513  
24 Beacon St  
Boston, MA 02133

The Honorable Representative Mindy Domb, Chair  
Joint Committee on Mental Health, Substance Use and Recovery  
State House, Room 33  
24 Beacon St  
Boston, MA 02133

### **Re: Testimony in Support of S.1399: An Act to increase investment in behavioral health care in the Commonwealth**

Dear Senator Velis, Representative Domb, and Honorable Members of the Joint Committee on Mental Health, Substance Use and Recovery:

I am writing to express the National Alliance on Mental Illness of Massachusetts' (NAMI Mass) strong support for **S.1399, An Act to increase investment in behavioral health care in the Commonwealth**. This bill would create a process for increasing investment in behavioral health expenditures over baseline behavioral health care spending.

NAMI Mass is a grassroots nonprofit comprised of individuals with mental health conditions, their families, and caregivers. Our community relies on access to the Commonwealth's mental health services to manage mental health conditions and sustain recovery. That is why we advocate for a well-funded behavioral health system that promotes access to quality care.

In Massachusetts, behavioral health services have been historically underfunded, a lack of investment that has contributed to gaps in care and underwhelming treatment capacity. As a result, individuals and families have been left without access to appropriate treatment. According to a 2023 report, nearly 1 in 3 adults and 1 in 2 youth experienced high or very high levels of

psychological distress,<sup>1</sup> while a Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts Foundation study revealed that 26% of Massachusetts adults in need of behavioral health care did not receive any services.<sup>2</sup> Workforce shortages, caused by a combination of burnout, retention and recruitment challenges, inadequate compensation, and underfunding, have only exacerbated this accessibility crisis.<sup>3</sup> If people cannot access timely, quality behavioral health treatment when and where they need it, Massachusetts residents and communities will continue to feel the impact in the form of increased mental health crises and worsening symptoms, which can further lead to chronic health conditions, homelessness, substance use, and incarceration.

To address the critical investment deficit in behavioral health, S.1399 lays out a plan for increasing behavioral health expenditures over time, following the example of the Health Policy Commission's (HPC) proven investment structure.

Specifically, S.1399 proposes a timeline and process to increase behavioral health investment by 30% over 2025's baseline expenditure in 2026, 2027, and 2028. For 2029 and beyond, the HPC can amend the expenditure target. Additionally, the bill includes provisions to track behavioral health expenditures compared to investment goals and to create a task force to establish guiding principles that will support health care entities in meeting their spending benchmarks and prioritizing evidence-based practices. These measures will ensure that the spending increase contributes to the growth of a robust, accessible behavioral health system. Importantly, this investment increase keeps total health care expenditures (THCE) within the cost growth benchmark set by the HPC, ensuring a fiscally responsible process.

It is more imperative than ever for behavioral health services to be well-funded in response to threats to federal funding for mental health, Medicaid, and other supportive services.

Considering both this context and the ever-increasing prevalence of mental health conditions in Massachusetts, it is incumbent on us at the state level to prioritize sustainable funding.

I urge you to report favorably on S.1399 so that every resident of the Commonwealth can access timely, quality behavioral health services. Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

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<sup>1</sup> Bureau of Community Health and Prevention. (August 2024). 2023 Community Health Equity Survey (CHES): Mental Health Report. MA Department of Public Health.

<sup>2</sup> Anthony, S., Boyes, E., Guyer, J., & Rozario, N. (2024). *Massachusetts Roadmap for Behavioral Health Reform: Overview and Implementation Update*. Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts Foundation. [https://www.bluecrossmafoundation.org/sites/g/files/cspw2101/files/2024-08/BH\\_Reform\\_Roadmap\\_Aug2024\\_final\\_0.pdf](https://www.bluecrossmafoundation.org/sites/g/files/cspw2101/files/2024-08/BH_Reform_Roadmap_Aug2024_final_0.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> Massachusetts Taxpayers Foundation. (December 5, 2024). *Behavioral Health Workforce Shortages Continue to Create Challenges for Individuals Seeking Care* [Press Release]. <https://www.masstaxpayers.org/sites/default/files/publications/2024-12/MTF%20The%20Behavioral%20Health%20Challenge%20Press%20Release.pdf>

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