



June 7th, 2023

The Honorable Paul Feeney, Chair
Joint Committee on Financial Services
State House, Room 112
Boston, MA 02133

The Honorable James Murphy, Chair
Joint Committee on Financial Services
State House, Room 254
Boston, MA 02133

RE: Written Testimony in Support of H.984/S.631, An Act relative to access to care for serious mental illness

Dear Chair Feeney and Chair Murphy, and Honorable Members of the Joint Committee on Financial Services:

I am writing to express the National Alliance on Mental Illness, Massachusetts' (NAMI Mass) strong support for **H.984/S.631**, *An Act relative to access to care for serious mental illness*. This bill defines serious mental illness as a mental disorder resulting in serious functional impairment that substantially interferes with or limits one or more major life activities. This bill would ensure that any health insurance plan would cover medications for serious mental illness without prior authorization or step therapy protocols. Effectively, this would provide Massachusetts residents living with a mental health condition timely access to medications their health care provider prescribes.

At NAMI Mass, we are committed to improving the quality of life for people living with mental health conditions, their families, and their caregivers. We are committed to supporting all individuals, families, and communities across the Commonwealth of Massachusetts whose lives are disrupted by mental health challenges. NAMI Mass views mental health as a key component of overall health, and key to who we are as people. We are deeply concerned about the barriers many individuals living with a mental health condition face in accessing the care they need.

Access to appropriate, prescribed medications for those who choose to use them is a critical component of effective care for individuals living with a mental health condition. Lack of access to prescribed and desired medication can interfere with a person's work, school, and social relationships. The current authorization process can be time-consuming and result in frequent cycling through medications,

leading to emotional dysregulation, emergency room visits, hospitalizations, and other serious consequences. Massachusetts must strengthen health care access for individuals living with a mental health condition and curb negative outcomes with effective and timely medical support. Prioritizing an insurance plan's cost management technique over a person's needs identified by a health care provider is at odds with effective health care.

By eliminating these barriers to medication access, **H.984/S.631** would improve the lives of thousands of individuals and families affected by serious mental illness in Massachusetts. We urge you to support this important legislation and move it favorably out of the Joint Committee on Financial Services, so individuals living with a mental health condition have access to the medication their prescriber believes would work best, regardless of cost.

Thank you for your time and attention. Your consideration of these matters is very much appreciated.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Jacqueline Hubbard".

Jacqueline Hubbard, Esq.
Deputy Director of Policy, Advocacy, and Communications
NAMI Massachusetts