

NAMI Massachusetts 2025 - 2026 Legislative Priorities

The Policy, Advocacy, and Communication (PAC) Team at NAMI Massachusetts aims to provide direction and guidance on policy issues affecting mental health in the Commonwealth to Affiliates, state agencies, community stakeholders, advocates, and the general public. Legislation is organized by primary area of focus, but categories do often overlap.

Equity and Inclusion in Mental Health Access and Services

H.1135: An Act for supportive care for serious mental illness - Rep. Decker

Requires commercial insurers to cover evidence-based care for first-episode psychosis, including 24/7 multidisciplinary wraparound services and assertive community treatment, ensuring parity in mental health coverage.

Current Status: Redrafted to H.4896 and is before the Joint Committee on Health Care Financing.

S.1403/H.1136: An Act relative to reducing administrative burden/An Act improving the health insurance prior authorization process - Sen. Friedman/Rep. Decker

Improves access to mental health care and medications by limiting prior authorization barriers. Prohibits retroactive denials and requires insurers to report data on approvals, denials, appeals, and delays. Also mandates a Health Policy Commission report on the impact of prior authorization.

Current Status: S.1403 is before the Senate Ways and Means Committee and H.1136 has been redrafted to H.4616 and is before the Joint Committee on Health Care Financing.

Mental Health as Integral to Overall Health, Addressing Social Determinants of Health

S.708/H.1128: An Act preserving access to treatment for patients with serious mental illness - Sen. Cronin/Rep. Decker

This legislation advances patient equity by eliminating prior authorization, step therapy, and other barriers that delay access to medication for individuals with serious mental illness within health insurance carriers or utilization review organizations.

Current Status: S.708 is before the Senate Ways and Means Committee and H.1128 has been redrafted to H.4892 and is before the Joint Committee on Health Care Financing.



S.283/H.383: An Act expanding licensure opportunity for school counselors - Sen. Payano/ Rep. Hamilton & Rep. Vargas

Streamlines the path for DESE-credentialed school counselors to become Licensed Mental Health Counselors (LMHC) by recognizing prior coursework, supervision hours, and allowing school counselors to sit for the qualifying exam. This increases the number of LMHCs in schools while maintaining licensing standards.

Current Status: S.283 was redrafted to S.2706 and is before the Senate Ways and Means Committee and H.383 has been redrafted to H.4456 and is before the House Ways and Means Committee.

S.1384/H.2221 An Act relative to student mental health - Sen. Commerford/ Rep. Lewis & Rep. Hamilton

Includes the 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline on all student identification cards.

Current Status: S.1384 is before the Senate Ways and Means Committee and H.2221 is in the House Committee on Bills in the Third Reading.

H.2193 An Act to ensure efficient and effective implementation of the roadmap for behavioral health reform - Rep. Barber & Rep. Rogers

Codifies the state's Behavioral Health Roadmap to better coordinate the behavioral health care system, expand access to community-based treatment, and ensure culturally responsive care. The bill also increases transparency through a public data dashboard tracking service use, progress, and disparities.

Current Status: Before the Joint Committee on Health Care Financing.

Human Rights and Protection Against Discrimination

H.2198: An Act reducing emergency department boarding - Rep. Decker

Prevents individuals from being involuntarily held for more than 72 hours at facilities not authorized by the Department of Mental Health (DMH). Any psychiatric hold exceeding 48 hours at such facilities must be referred to the Committee on Public Counsel Services for appointment of counsel.

Current Status: Redrafted to H.5275 and is before the House Committee on Ways and Means.

H.2199: An Act ending unnecessary hospitalizations - Rep. Decker

Prioritizes placing an individual in a community alternative before applying for involuntary detention by a professional or police officer and shall arrange for transportation for the individual.

Current Status: Redrafted to H.5276 and is before the House Committee on Ways and Means.



S.1389/H.2211: An Act modernizing the 6 fundamental rights - Sen. Cyr/Rep. Higgins

Establishes the statutory rights of all people receiving mental health services in state hospitals, community mental health centers, and residential programs or inpatient facilities. Includes access to a telephone/videophone, ability to send and receive mail, the right to receive or refuse visitors, a humane psychological and physical environment, the ability to see attorneys, doctors, and mental health professionals, and daily access to the outdoors.

Current Status: S.1389 is before the Senate Ways and Means Committee and H.2211 was redrafted to H.5229 and is before the House Ways and Means Committee.

Person-Centered Mental Health Support for Individuals and Families

S.1407: Resolve to ensure delivery of mental health services to adults with acute mental illness - Sen. E. Kennedy

Creates a special commission to study the staffing levels and delivery of services for case managers at the Department of Mental Health (DMH) tasked with serving adults with acute mental illness.

Current Status: Before the Senate Ways and Means Committee.

Criminal Justice and the Decriminalization of Mental Health

S.1386/H.3291/H.3313 An Act to transfer Bridgewater State Hospital from the Department of Corrections to the Department of Mental Health - Sen. Creem/Rep.Barber & Rep. Decker

Will transfer oversight of Bridgewater State Hospital (BSH) to the Department of Mental Health (DMH) from the Department of Corrections (DOC).

Current Status: S.1386 is before the Joint Committee on Health Care Financing and H.3291 and H.3313 have been combined into one bill and are before the House Ways and Means Committee.



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