



# NAMI Connecticut

Connecticut's Voice on Mental Illness

## Testimony before the Human Services Committee March 13, 2007

### Support for SB 1338

Good afternoon, Senator Harris, Representative Villano, and members of the Human Services Committee. My name is Kate Mattias, and I am the Executive Director for the National Alliance on Mental Illness of CT (NAMI-CT). NAMI-CT is in strong support of SB 1338, An Act Concerning a Cost of Living Increase for Private Providers of Health and Human Services.

The Governor's Budget provides for a low wage pool for a fraction of providers rather than the necessary COLA (cost of living adjustment) for nonprofit provider, which will have devastating effects on their ability to provide quality services. The state must move toward adequate pay for its nonprofit providers. The longer this need is left unaddressed, the more likely it is to lead to irreparable damage to the community based service system.

Furthermore, the Governor's budget provides NO inflationary increases for grants to mental health and substance abuse providers, which will only serve to further erode the delivery of basic services in our state. There must be a Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) to the mental health and substance abuse grant accounts, in order for providers to realistically have the ability to maintain continuity of care and quality services for people in need. In an already extremely fragile funding environment, we cannot afford to further restrict our nonprofit providers, which will only force them to cut back on staff and desperately needed services.

Please help to prevent the impending program and service reductions and the further loss of quality staff. According to the Connecticut Mental Health Cabinet Report, private nonprofit providers continue to be the principal mental health lifeline in our state, and this step toward parity with state providers must be funded.

In order for nonprofit providers to be able to succeed in our state, there must be a 7% Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) in FY '08 and a 5% COLA in FY '09.

Thank you for considering this vital legislation.