

**Testimony before the Housing Committee
March 8, 2012
Support for SB 94**

Good afternoon, Senator Gomes, Representative Butler and members of the Housing Committee. My name is Daniela Giordano, and I am the Public Policy Director for the National Alliance on Mental Illness, CT (NAMI-CT). I am here today on behalf of NAMI-CT to support SB 94 - An Act Concerning the Equal Treatment of Renters with Mental Disabilities.

We would like to commend the Governor and the Legislature for making affordable and adequate housing a central part of our state's goals. Equalizing the treatment of renters to include not only people with physical disabilities but also with mental disabilities is a necessary and overdue step. This move will add a level of extra protection for renters with mental impairment by not allowing individuals to be evicted based solely on having a mental impairment. Thinking of people with mental and physical disabilities as equally deserving and having equal rights protections also moves us further toward integrating mental and physical wellness in our thinking and actions. Additionally, this bill also treats people equally who are sixty-two years of age and older and people with challenges connected to their health.

We do request two changes to the bill to fulfill on its intention of equalizing protection and allowing people to live in their communities while being treated with respect regardless of challenging conditions such as physical or mental impairment.

The first change request refers to Section 1 where it states "a person with a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities and who has a record of such impairment or is regarded as having such an impairment." Changing this "and" to an "**or**" will make it consistent with federal law.

The second change request refers to Section 2. We request to eliminate Section 2 because the requirement of a physician's statement is overly restrictive as many other health care providers successfully treat mental health conditions including psychologists, Advanced Practice Registered Nurses (APRNs), Licensed Clinical Social Workers (LCSWs) etc.

Thank you for your time. I am happy to answer questions you may have.
Respectfully yours, Daniela Giordano