

**Testimony of the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) of  
Connecticut**

**Before the Public Health Committee**

March 8, 2013

**In Opposition to**

**Proposed H.B. 5992 AN ACT CONCERNING THE TREATMENT OF PERSONS WITH  
PSYCHIATRIC DISABILITIES**

Senator Gerratana, Representative Johnson and distinguished members of the Public Health Committee, my name is Daniela Giordano and I am the Public Policy Director for Adults, State and National matters with the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) of Connecticut. NAMI Connecticut is the state affiliate of NAMI, the nation's largest grassroots mental health organization dedicated to building better lives for all those affected by mental illness. NAMI Connecticut offers support groups, educational programs, and advocacy for improved services, more humane treatment and an end to stigma and economic and social discrimination. We represent individuals who actually live with mental illness and parents and family members of individuals living with mental illness. I am here today on behalf of NAMI Connecticut to oppose HB 5992 An Act Concerning the Treatment of Persons with Psychiatric Disabilities.

This bill's stated intention is "to enhance the care and treatment of persons with psychiatric disabilities." It would 1) allow certain health care providers to obtain medical records for the treatment of patients in facilities for persons with psychiatric disabilities, and 2) allow persons involved in formulating the patient's discharge plan to communicate with the patient's family members concerning the plan, which would normally not be permitted due to the federal Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act, HIPAA law.

We oppose this proposal as it would violate the privacy of people with psychiatric disabilities and discriminate based on their diagnosis of a mental disability as this proposal does not apply to any other (non-psychiatric) illness or disease. Under current conditions, health care providers who wish to consult previous medical records to better treat their patients, can utilize release of information forms with the patient's consent to obtain such records. This complies with HIPAA laws and ensures that the patient's right



to autonomy and self-determination is preserved and respected. Allowing discharge planners to communicate with family members to coordinate care is also possible if the person being treated gives express consent to such exchange. Even if an individual chooses not to give such consent, a family member can still communicate with a provider and give information to the provider without being told confidential information about the person by the provider. Coordination of care can be achieved without violating a person's right to confidentiality regardless of one's diagnosis.

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