

**Testimony of the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) Connecticut
Before the Human Services Committee
March 12, 2015**

**IN SUPPORT OF
HB 6947 AN ACT CONCERNING STATE CONTRACTS FOR HUMAN SERVICES**

Good afternoon Senator Moore, Representative Abercrombie and members of the Human Services Committee. My name is Daniela Giordano and I am the Public Policy Director for the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) 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 health conditions. 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 live with mental health conditions and parents and family members of individuals living with mental health conditions. I am writing to you today on behalf of NAMI Connecticut to support raised bill *HB 6947 An Act Concerning State Contracts for Human Services*.

Thank you to the committee for raising this important bill which would ensure that non-profit service providers who have contracts with the State would be paid rates that reflect the actual costs of providing those services. As most of you know, private non-profit health and human services providers largely do a great job providing essential services to the residents of Connecticut in a very efficient and effective manner and are the lifeline for many residents who need services, including behavioral health services. You are probably also well aware that the recent cuts to non-profit services are only the latest of many, including several years of not providing rate increases based on increased costs, such as reflected in the average annual growth of the Consumer Price Index (CPI) or inflation, thus practically reducing reimbursements rates as costs of providing those services continues to increase.

Many individuals we work with rely on receiving quality services from local community non-profit providers. However, they have experienced difficulty finding or accessing such local care, often because access has become more limited and people are told that services are being reduced. Additionally, individuals seeking care have experienced high turnover rates of staff which impedes the connections made between people providing services and individuals looking for care. This has a negative impact on the health outcomes for these individuals. Having adequate access to community based services is also a necessity to address health issues early on and is a crucial component to prevent the need for higher-level/higher-cost services such as emergency room visits or hospitalizations.

As the above makes clear, passing this bill would be a win-win for everyone, individuals in Connecticut who rely on the essential services provided in an efficient manner by the non-profit sector, people employed by this vital industry and the State's economy. The time to act and make smart investments is now. We cannot wait any longer to make changes that will put these essential services on the path for better sustainability.

Thank you for your time and attention. Please let me know if I can answer any questions for you.
Respectfully submitted, Daniela Giordano, MSW, *Public Policy Director*, NAMI Connecticut