

**Testimony of the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) Connecticut
Before the Public Health Committee
March 4, 2015**

**IN OPPOSITION TO
HB 5626 AN ACT CONCERNING PRESCRIPTION DRUGS FOR PSYCHIATRIC PATIENTS.**

Good afternoon Senator Gerratana, Representative Ritter and members of the Public Health Committee. My name is Daniela Giordano and I am the Public Policy Director with 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 oppose proposed bill *HB 5626 An Act Concerning Prescription Drugs for Psychiatric Patients*.

The stated purpose of HB 5626 is to "prevent misuse of prescription drugs", which we can probably all agree, is a good idea. However, the actual bill language proposes "to prohibit health care providers from prescribing more than a one-month supply of a drug to treat a patient's psychiatric condition." This proposed bill singles out one particular group of people, individuals with mental health conditions, and would prevent individuals from being able to work with their doctors to manage and address their health conditions through one means, prescription drugs. Making decisions about health care choices, including the decision of what drugs to prescribe, how much and for how many months at a time in a safe manner, should be made between the individual and the individual's prescribing doctor, not generally be capped at one month. Singling out one group of people also seems to exclude individuals in that group of people from being treated equally compared to people who deal with other health conditions.

Additionally, in order for insurance carriers to save money, they oftentimes request or require individuals to purchase more than a one-month supply of whatever prescription drugs individuals are taking on a regular basis, oftentimes urging people to order a three-month supply. If the concern for misuse of prescription drugs comes from certain medications, then there already is a list of drugs that are considered controlled substances which have special and stricter regulations. Connecticut should not attempt to include all drugs used to address mental health conditions in a more restricted class – that would go against best practices in health, when taking away decisions from the individual and their treating doctor, and violate an individual's right to individualized care.

Thank you for your time and attention. Please let me know if I can answer any questions for you.

Respectfully,

Daniela Giordano, MSW
Public Policy Director
NAMI Connecticut