



# Connecticut

**Testimony of the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) Connecticut  
Before the Planning and Development Committee  
February 13, 2015**

**IN OPPOSITION TO  
Proposed H.B. No. 5618 AN ACT CONCERNING COMMUNITY-BASED RESIDENTIAL FACILITIES  
Proposed H.B. No. 6483 AN ACT ESTABLISHING A TASK FORCE TO STUDY GROUP HOME  
DISTRIBUTION**

Senator Osten, Representative Miller and members of the Planning and Development 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 *HB 5618 An Act Concerning Community-based Residential Facilities* and proposed *HB 6483 An Act Establishing a Task Force to Study Group Home Distribution*.

Proposed changes include the following:

- Notifying town officials of the locations of group homes (and other community-based facilities) in all towns across the state
- Reviewing placements made by the state, potentially allowing for an administrative appeals process
- Determining the costs of community-based care versus institutional care, potentially pushing for more institutionalized treatment

We strongly oppose most of the proposed changes in these bills as they would open the door to discrimination against people based on their health status and needs. It is important to remember that people who live in what is commonly called group homes are members of their communities and are constituents – just like any other town resident living next door to these homes. None of us has specific information of who our neighbors are when we move into a house or apartment. Why should people with certain health needs be treated any differently?

Besides the fact that people in these homes are town residents, it is also crucial to note that people identified as having a psychiatric disability are a protected class under the Connecticut constitution and have protections under both state and federal laws. Making their health information public would violate these laws. The state and municipalities would face legal challenges based on laws such as the Fair Housing Act and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

576 Farmington Avenue, Hartford, CT 06105 • (860) 882-0236 • (800) 215-3021

Fax: (860) 882-0240 • Website: [www.namict.org](http://www.namict.org)



## Connecticut

We are concerned about of how municipalities would conduct reviews of placements. Under what circumstances and on what grounds would municipal officials make such a review? On what expertise might they make a different judgment?

Furthermore, adding additional barriers to supporting people to live in the community with relevant services and supports will not address our citizen's needs AND will make budget issues worse. If the suggestion is to put people back into institutions, the cost would be about \$1,200 PER day PER person for inpatient placement. This would add unnecessary and unsustainable costs to the state and its taxpayers.

We understand that there may be possible cost concerns for towns that have been very supportive of citizen's needs and that a substantial increase in use of emergency services needs to be met with adequate resources. We are also in support of additional training for facility staff if that seems necessary and helpful, and understand that a training has already been developed and is looking for implementation funding.

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