



**Testimony of the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) Connecticut
Before the Insurance and Real Estate Committee
March 10, 2016**

**IN SUPPORT OF
(RAISED) S.B. 373 AN ACT LIMITING CHANGES TO HEALTH INSURERS' PRESCRIPTION DRUG
FORMULARIES**

Good afternoon Senator Crisco, Representative Megna and members of the Insurance and Real Estate 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 quality of life for individuals and families in the community. I am writing to you today on behalf of NAMI Connecticut to support Raised Bill *SB 373 – An Act Limiting Changes to Health Insurers' Prescription Drug Formularies*.

This bill would prevent health insurance policies from being able to remove prescription drugs or putting them into a higher cost-tier during the term of a health insurance policy, unless the drug is determined to be no longer safe or effective. Other drugs may still be added to the list during the term of the policy.

Mental health medications are unique and can play a relevant role in recovery for some people. Several different classes of medications are used to treat mental health conditions, including stimulant and non-stimulant medications, anti-anxiety medications, mood stabilizers and anticonvulsants, antidepressants, and antipsychotics.

Mental health medications—even those within the same class—often have biochemical differences that result in significant variation in side effects, drug interactions, and effectiveness for every individual. Unlike many medications, the side effects of antipsychotic medications or mood stabilizers can be extremely serious. These side effects, along with a person's characteristics such as presenting issues, family history, and co-morbid conditions, require multiple medication options for persons with mental health conditions. Similarly, barriers to access of mental health related medications often lead to disruptions in being able to take these medications. Such barriers include potential changes in prescription drug coverage and thus either added financial costs to affected individuals or clinically not indicated changes in prescribed medications. We know that such disruptions can lead to increases in emergency room visits, hospitalizations, incarceration, unemployment and homelessness. These disruptions ultimately bring about increased financial costs to the state, on top of the increased human costs to the persons directly impacted. For all of these reasons, NAMI Connecticut supports this added protection of predictability of prescription drug coverage.

Thank you for your time and attention.
Respectfully, Daniela Giordano