



**Testimony of Thomas Burr
Insurance and Real Estate Committee
February 9, 2021**

Re: S.B. 842: An Act Concerning Health Insurance and Health Care in Connecticut.

Good afternoon Senator Lesser, Representative Wood, and members of the Insurance and Real Estate Committee. My name is Thomas Burr, I am the Community and Affiliate Relations Manager at the Connecticut State office of the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI Connecticut). NAMI CT is in support of Senate Bill 842: An Act Concerning Health Insurance and Health Care in Connecticut.

NAMI is the nation's largest mental health organization dedicated to building better lives for all people affected by mental health conditions. NAMI Connecticut, and its local affiliates provide support groups, educational programs, and advocacy for people with mental health conditions and their family members and love ones.

The continued, unsustainable rise in health care costs, including premiums, deductibles, co-pays and co-insurance has become an unbearable burden not only for me and my family, but my co-workers as well. For example, my wife and I get health insurance from our respective employers, but with the astronomically high deductibles, we cannot afford to get sick or injured.

There is an ongoing health & mental health care emergency that demands urgent action.

The COVID pandemic has caused a huge spike in people seeking mental health care. It's critical that we expand health & mental health care coverage and make dependable health & mental care more affordable & accessible in the face of a deadly pandemic, especially with so many workers losing their jobs and health coverage.

New options are critical, not just for NAMI Connecticut, but for all of Connecticut:

- Too many businesses and individuals are not being served by the current health care market
- The state can build on its successful state employee health plan to help more people access quality, affordable coverage
- This will open better options for more people: small businesses, nonprofits, and individuals.



A public option is good for our economy and will lower costs for everyone.

- Making health care more affordable is good for our economy. Expanding access and lowering costs puts more money in the pockets of working families, empowers workers to seek better job opportunities, levels the playing field for small businesses and strengthens our economy by keeping our workers healthier and more productive.
- A public option would lower costs for everyone. When people without insurance cannot pay for their care, hospitals and insurance companies pass the cost along to the rest of us. This proposal ensures that people have affordable health insurance and are able to get the medical treatment they need, which will bring down costs for everyone.
- Health care costs are a key driver of Connecticut's high cost-of-living. Reducing health care expenses -- especially for working- and middle-class residents -- will expand the state's economy and ease the financial burden on families.

Consumers demand dependable, affordable care.

- Consumers demand dependable, affordable care. A majority of voters¹ (84%) in Connecticut believe making a change to our healthcare system as a result of COVID-19 is important and 7 in 10 voters support a public healthcare option. Offering public plans will provide quality, dependable, and affordable health coverage for workers and their families.

Please help NAMI Connecticut be able to offer its employees access to affordable, quality health care, and vote YES on S.B. 842: An Act Concerning Health Insurance and Health Care in Connecticut.

Thank you for your time and attention.

Sincerely,

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¹ CT Campaign for Affordable Health Care
<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1ZOwfc71xDDmdVHku6Jqgl5x5VTXSxQp/view>



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