

January 20, 2021

**House Bill 135 - Pharmacists - Administration of Self-Administered Medications and Maintenance Injectable Medications - SUPPORT**

Chair Pendergrass, Vice Chair Peña-Melnyk, and members of the House Health and Government Relations Committee,

The National Alliance on Mental Illness, Maryland and our 11 local affiliates across the state represent a statewide network of more than 45,000 families, individuals, community-based organizations and service providers. NAMI Maryland is dedicated to providing education, support and advocacy for persons with mental illnesses, their families and the wider community.

NAMI Maryland strongly supports HB 135, legislation that would permit pharmacists to administer injectable medications to their patients. NAMI Maryland strongly supports reduction of barriers to medication and treatment – especially for individuals with severe mental illness. Innovations in the range of evidence-based medications, therapy and psychosocial services such as psychiatric rehabilitation, housing, employment and peer supports have made wellness and recovery a reality for people living with mental health conditions.

**Medications are a powerful tool in treating mental illness.**

- Appropriate treatment leads to overwhelming success for mental health issues.
- Medication adherence is often key to experiencing recovery. Barriers to getting effective and well-tolerated medications, such as prior authorization, can result in poor outcomes for persons with mental illness.
- Injectable medications lead to better overall medication adherence and access to these treatments in the community only makes it easier for folks to stay on their treatment paths.

**Safety and healing should drive mental health care.**

- Persons with mental illness frequently have other health conditions and multiple medications. Drug interactions and possible dangerous side effects require appropriate medication choices, and pharmacists are trained to recognize potential interactions.
- Providers with expertise in mental health care are in short supply. Once under the care of a psychiatrist or physician, medication provision should be quick and affordable to access to help keep Marylanders healthy.

Without appropriate medications, persons with mental illness may experience instability—and at a high cost: increased risk of state psychiatric hospital and emergency department stays, homelessness, and, too frequently, incarceration.

**Research backs this up.**

- When individuals with mental illness were unable to get the proper medication: they are almost four times more likely to experience an emergency room visit, hospitalization, homelessness, incarceration, or suicidal behavior.

For these reasons, NAMI Maryland asks for a favorable report on HB 135.

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