



February 18, 2020

**Senate Bill 441 - Mental Health - Emergency Facilities List - Comprehensive Crisis Response Centers, Crisis Stabilization Centers, and Crisis Treatment Centers - SUPPORT**

Chair Kelly, Vice Chair Feldman, and members of the Senate Finance 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 SB 441, legislation that would require the Maryland Department of Health to include comprehensive crisis response centers, crisis stabilization centers, and crisis treatment centers and provide that information to law enforcement annually.

NAMI members – our family advocates and individuals living with mental illness could spend all day in your committee testifying to the need for easier access to care in times of crisis. When an individual is in a mental health crisis, time is of the essence. Studies show that the earlier an individual is stabilized, the more likely they can stay on their treatment journey and return to living well with mental illness. Extended stays in places like hospital emergency departments or even local jails can cause individuals in crisis to spiral down even further, making their path to treatment even more perilous.

SB 441 would ensure individuals experiencing a mental health or substance use crisis receive the most appropriate care in the most appropriate setting. Crisis response centers are designed specifically to address these situations, and the bill would ensure that if a crisis center is available, individuals have the option to be transported there rather than an emergency room.

We strongly support efforts to expand our crisis network and provide law enforcement and first responders with the tools they need to divert individuals with behavioral health issues.

For these reasons, NAMI Maryland asks for a favorable report on SB 441.

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