

February 15, 2024

Chairwoman Pena Melnyk, Vice Chair Cullison, and distinguished members of the Health and Government Operations Committee,

The National Alliance on Mental Illness, Maryland and our 11 local affiliates across the state represent a statewide network of more than 58,000 families, individuals, community-based organizations, and service providers. NAMI Maryland is a non-profit that is dedicated to providing education, support, and advocacy for persons with mental illnesses, their families and the wider community.

Substance use disorders commonly co-occur with mental health conditions, especially serious mental illness like schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, depression, PTSD and other forms of trauma. People with mental illnesses often turn to drugs and alcohol to quiet their symptoms, and drugs and alcohol can adversely affect our nervous system and increase risk for mental illness.

According to the National Survey on Drug Use and Health, 17 million U.S. adults experienced both mental illness and a substance use disorder in 2020.<sup>1</sup> By capping the co-pay for opioid reversal products at \$10/package, we are making them more accessible. Naloxone hydrochloride is a medication that rapidly reverses an opioid overdose. The more access to this lifesaving drug, the better the outcome for people who may experience an overdose.

Mental illness and substance abuse disorder can be co-occurring disorders. This bill aims to protect our most vulnerable Marylanders by increasing access and availability to life-saving drugs.

NAMI MD urges a favorable report.

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<sup>1</sup> [Key Substance Use and Mental Health Indicators in the United States: Results from the 2020 National Survey on Drug Use and Health \(samhsa.gov\)](https://www.samhsa.gov)