

January 28, 2024

Chair Beidle, Vice Chair Hayes, and distinguished members of the Finance Committee,

The National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI)-Maryland respectfully requests a favorable report on SB326.

NAMI Maryland and our 11 local affiliates across the state represent a network of more than 58,000 families, individuals, community-based organizations, and service providers. NAMI Maryland is a 501(c)(3) non-profit dedicated to providing education, support, and advocacy for people living with mental illnesses, their families, and the wider community.

Peer support services are a vital part of the mental healthcare system. People living with mental health conditions, or anyone seeking mental health treatment, have the same right to privacy as any other patient or client—whether seeking treatment from a psychiatrist, psychologist, social worker, Certified Peer Recovery Specialist, other practitioners trained in peer support services, or any other provider of mental health services. Maryland’s first responders and peace officers, including law enforcement officers, can benefit from peer support services, and they should do so with complete confidence that records of those interactions are confidential.

SB326 would guarantee the privacy of the contents of any written or oral communication regarding a peer support interaction, unless it contains an explicit threat of suicide, a clear threat to others, or information regarding harm or neglect to children or vulnerable individuals. NAMI Maryland believes that SB326 includes adequate provisions for those circumstances and that passage of SB326 will provide encouragement and support to Maryland’s law enforcement officers in seeking peer support services.

For these reasons, we urge a favorable report on SB326.

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