

February 24, 2021

Senate Bill 638 – Specialty Mental Health Services and Payment of Claims – Enforcement - SUPPORT

Chair Kelley, 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.

SB 638 authorizes the Maryland Insurance Commissioner to enforce minimum performance standards for the Administrative Service Organization (ASO) that is responsible for managing care and paying claims for Maryland public behavioral health system.

Optum runs the state’s behavioral health ASO, which typically manages more than \$1 billion in payments a year for more than 200,000 Marylanders with behavioral health issues. The extreme billing issues and service denials are putting access to services at risk – extraordinarily concerning in a year when more Marylanders are relying on Medicaid and our current pandemic is taking an incredible toll on the mental health of everyone.

We know you don’t control the contract, but without immediate action, our public behavioral health system will start to crumble. Please pass this legislation accountable. This debacle couldn’t have occurred during a worse year and it’s been months and the issue is still not resolved. We cannot risk providers turning us and our loved ones away because the state won’t pay.

For these reasons, NAMI Maryland asks for a favorable report on **SB 638**.