

## **SB 994 – Public Health - Mental Health Advance Directives - Awareness and Statewide Database**

*FAVORABLE*

Chair and Members of the 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 provides education, support and advocacy for persons with mental illnesses, their families and the wider community.

SB 994 requires that the Maryland Department of Health (MDH) develop and implement a public awareness campaign to encourage the use of mental health advance directives in the State. The campaign would include awareness initiatives to encourage and support outreach efforts by state and local agencies to inform present or future recipients of mental health services and members of their families, health care providers, and other behavioral health care partners regarding mental health advance directives. The Maryland Behavioral Health Crisis Response System within the Behavioral Health Administration must develop and maintain a centralized statewide database of mental health advance directives that can be readily accessed to assist responses to behavioral health crises and the provisions of mental health services.

NAMI Maryland believes that all people with mental health conditions deserve access to supports that promote wellness. We support public policies and laws that encourage the development and use of mental health advance directives (MHAD). Maryland is one of the 25 states that outlines the contents and process for establishing a MHAD (MD Health Article § 5-602.1.)

Establishing a data base for MHADs allow for a better crisis response from all crisis responders that have access to it.

- Mental health advance directives are legal documents that allows people with mental illness to state their preferences for treatment in advance of a mental health crisis.
- MHADs help an individual with mental illness preserve their autonomy while ensuring the right care at the right time.
- People who [complete](#) MHADs are more likely to work collaboratively with their clinicians, [experience](#) fewer coercive crisis interventions, and feel that their personal needs for mental health services are being met.
- When MHADs are used correctly, medical providers, local hospitals, police departments and caregivers can provide care that is aligned with an individual's preference.
- All states should have laws that allow mental health advance directives in order to empower people with mental illness and support a path to recovery.
- Policies that encourage the use of MHADs, and prioritize including MHADs in routine care, can help people with mental illness protect their autonomy in a crisis.