



February 27, 2024

Chair Smith, Vice Chair Waldstreicher, and distinguished members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee,

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.

In working to reunite families and bring home missing persons, NAMI Maryland appeals to service providers, professionals, and others assisting persons with serious mental illnesses who are missing to do what is in the best interest of all concerned.

We thank the sponsors for their work on SB817 and recognize the impact it will have on raising awareness and helping to locate vulnerable missing persons in the state. Establishing a Purple Alert Program in the state is the best way to achieve this goal.

While we support the bill's means and objectives, we believe that it omits protection for individuals with mental health conditions as it is currently written. NAMI Maryland believes that missing persons with mental illnesses should receive the same full range of access to services and have the same opportunity to be located as all other missing persons. The thought of a family member, friend, or someone else you care about going missing can be terrifying. You don't know where they are, if they're hurt, or if they need help. When this person lives with a mental health condition, the situation may be even more serious, and acting quickly can make a difference.

For these reasons, we urge a favorable report with an amendment that includes these vulnerable individuals. The House sponsor, Delegate Guyton, has submitted this amendment and Senator Ellis has submitted it as well.

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