

February 7, 2025

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

The National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI)-Maryland respectfully requests a favorable report on SB509.

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.

NAMI Maryland supported legislation that enabled assisted outpatient treatment (AOT) in the 2024 legislative session, and we appreciate the General Assembly's enacting of that life-saving new statewide program. SB509 requires that people subject to an AOT order not be in possession of firearms. A person under an AOT order is, by definition, a person who is in need of AOT to prevent harm to themselves or others, which includes harm to self by the use of firearms.

Gun violence and suicide are both separate but intertwined public health crises in the United States.¹ People living with mental health conditions, including the relatively small number of individuals under AOT orders, live at much higher risk of attempting or completing suicide than the general public,² and mitigating firearm possession is straightforward way to decrease that risk.

NAMI Maryland believes that SB509 will lead to a reduction of suicide and gun violence associated with people subject to AOT orders, and for those reasons, we urge a favorable report on SB509.

¹ National Alliance on Mental Illness, "Gun Violence Research," <https://www.nami.org/advocacy/policy-priorities/stopping-harmful-practices/gun-violence-research/>.

² ET Isometsa, *Psychological Autopsy Studies—A review*, 7 Eur. Psychiatry 379 (2001).