

January 28, 2026

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

Please accept this testimony in favor of SB205.

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, along with our partners at NAMI National, have supported mental health parity legislation at the federal and state level for decades, including the Mental Health Parity and Addiction Equity Act (MHPAEA) of 2008, its subsequent expansion under the Affordable Care Act, strengthening by the Maryland General Assembly in 2024, and more recent federal protections. NAMI Maryland shares the concerns of many in the General Assembly and Maryland's mental health advocacy community regarding current federal attacks on anti-discrimination provisions across the entire scope of law.

Parity matters because there can be no health care without mental health care. Medical/surgical insurance coverage alone does not treat the whole person. NAMI Maryland, through our warmline and community outreach, fields calls from people living with mental health conditions who face the daily realities of a historic lack of parity—difficulties in finding mental health providers accepted by insurance or Medicaid, being able to access providers in time to treat their symptoms, and unaffordability of out-of-pocket expenses related to mental health care. SB205 would codify current federal protections into Maryland law, including a definition of mental health benefits, a prohibition on the use of discriminatory information to impact coverage, requiring coverage in classifications consistent with medical/surgical conditions, data collection related to access of care issues, and clarification of the Maryland Insurance Administration's authority to enforce parity protections.

On behalf of NAMI Maryland's 11 local affiliates and a network of more than 60,000 Maryland families, individuals, community-based organizations and service providers, we ask for a favorable report of SB205.

Stephanie Slowly-Little  
Executive Director  
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