

February 19, 2026

Chair Bagnall, Vice Chair Cullison, and distinguished members of the Health Committee,

NAMI Maryland and our 11 local affiliates across the state represent a network of more than 60,000 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.

The goal of HB886 is to require Maryland Medical Assistance and insurers to cover the services of peer recovery specialists to make the option of peer-to-peer recovery programs more accessible to all Marylanders.

Peer recovery encourages individuals with lived experience to share that experience with someone who may currently be struggling with the same or similar situations. Peers provide a new perspective other specialists might not be able to provide simply because they never lived it. Peer support makes the care more personal and dynamic. It also shows the patient that things in fact can get better. When it comes to mental health, knowing that you are understood can go a long way, especially in the early stages of recovery. Peer to peer mental health programs do just that. They offer unique support for individuals struggling with mental illness.

We know that there is a growing need for mental health services in the State that we are currently unable to meet. Making peer-to-peer services, specifically peer-to-peer mental health services, more accessible would be a crucial step towards addressing the mental health crisis in our State and would provide hope and care to Marylanders who are suffering.

We at NAMI Maryland believe that peer recovery services focused on mental health and wellbeing are extremely beneficial to those who are suffering through the struggle that is mental illness. In fact, NAMI Maryland has a peer-to-peer program of our own, which is offered to everyone eighteen and older and works to provide a safe space with support, compassion, and understanding from others who can relate to personal experiences. Participants in our program learn how to strengthen relationships, balance changing health care needs, and better understand their mental health and recovery. Programs like ours are life changing for people dealing with mental illness and making them more accessible to all Marylanders will provide essential care to those in need. With all of this in mind, we at NAMI Maryland strongly urges a favorable report on HB886.

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