



Comments on House Bill 2023
From Chris Bouneff, Executive Director, NAMI Oregon
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Senate Committee on Health Care

NAMI Oregon wishes to express its support for House Bill 2023, which requires hospitals to create policies for discharge planning for patients admitted to psychiatric inpatient treatment.

NAMI Oregon believes the legislation before the Committee makes a significant improvement for patients and families who experience a mental health crisis that requires acute hospitalization. By establishing and making available a set of guidelines or protocols for individuals who are hospitalized and for the family, friends or other identified caregivers, we will enhance the patient experience and increase the odds that individuals and families affected by mental illness will receive the continued care and support they need after discharge to achieve long-term recovery.

In absence of such requirements in HB 2023, NAMI members and others will continue to experience uneven engagement and discharge planning. In many instances, hospital staff do an exceptional job treating patients and working with identified caregivers to prepare them for discharge from inpatient care. However, many also experience a jumbled experience in which patients and identified family/caregivers are ill-prepared for discharge and are left to fend for themselves in securing the follow-up care necessary for continued recuperation.

In such cases, many individuals and families continue to struggle and are at greater risk for re-hospitalization. And in some cases, the outcome is tragic and includes attempts of self-harm, including suicide.

NAMI members and allies have in other public testimony more eloquently described their experiences and challenges, which HB 2023 is intended to address. From an organizational perspective, having such policies in place and publicly available will aid NAMI when working with individuals and families during a psychiatric inpatient stay, which is often a stressful and confusing experience. Having access to written policies provides a reassuring roadmap for individuals and families/caregivers at a time that their world may feel turned upside down.

NAMI Oregon strongly supports HB 2023 and urges the Committee to approve the legislation. Thank you for this opportunity to provide our input.