



Comments on House Bill 2638  
From Chris Bouneff, Executive Director, NAMI Oregon  
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To Senate Committee on Health Care

NAMI Oregon wishes to express its opposition to the Dash-2 amendments proposed for House Bill 2638 because the language added to Section 2, Subsection 5 appears to countermand Oregon's longstanding patient protections that safeguard access to critical antipsychotic and antidepressant medications.

In particular, the language is unclear as to whether new mental health medications would be indefinitely subjected to prior authorization until such time at the Pharmacy and Therapeutics Committee "approves" it. Moreover, adding provisions that permit prior authorization for such medications for any period of time modifies Oregon's longstanding patient protections — protections that are in place for a population that is vulnerable to even the slightest barriers to accessing prescribed medications.

Based on the two public hearings for HB 2638, it appears that such modifications to Oregon's patient protections are unintended. As such, we urge the Committee to either return to the original bill as approved by the full House or to consider the Dash-1 amendments, which remove language that would permit prior authorization for newer mental health medications. Alternatively, we urge the Committee to clarify language in the Dash-2 amendment so that protections for mental health medications remain intact as legislatively intended.

If, indeed, the intent is to alter protections for individuals living with serious mental illness, we hope that the Committee would allow more robust conversation that engages our organization and other stakeholders who traditionally participate in such discussions. Restricting access to mental health medications for any period of time is a topic that necessitates more thoughtful discussion and consideration than has been available for the Dash-2 amendments.

Thank you for this opportunity to provide our input.