

**NAMI Ohio Testimony**  
**House Bill 421**  
**House Health and Aging Committee**

*May 11<sup>th</sup>, 2016*

Chairwoman Gonzales, Vice-chair Huffman and Ranking Member Antonio, thank you for allowing me the opportunity to testify on House Bill 421. My name is Dustin McKee and I am the Policy Director of the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) of Ohio. NAMI Ohio works every day to improve the quality of life and ensure dignity and respect for persons with serious mental illness, and to offer support to their families and close friends. NAMI Ohio works collaboratively with its network of 55 local affiliates to educate and support people impacted by mental illness. We also work with policy makers and the public to raise awareness, destroy stigma, and enact policies that enhance the lives of people affected by serious mental illness.

HB 421 will grant trained pharmacists the ability to administer certain injectable prescribed drugs involved in the treatment of severe mental illness, substance abuse and pregnant women at high risk of complications. It does these things without granting pharmacists prescribing authority or changing ways the medicines associated with these treatments are prescribed

As Ohio's Voices for families and people living with mental illness, we have long been focused on increasing access to life-saving and life enhancing treatments for people with mental illness, regardless of their geographic location and mobility. This bill would help increase the access that people with a serious and persistent mental illness (SPMI) have to long-acting injectable antipsychotics, which can dramatically improve outcomes for people with these conditions. As a result, we commend Representative LaTourette for sponsoring this legislation, and respectfully request that members of the Ohio General Assembly pass the bill expeditiously.

Far too many patients have to travel long distances to see the psychiatrists and providers who are authorized to administer these treatments. As has been noted in prior testimony, most people in the state of Ohio live within five miles of a pharmacy. Therefore, allowing trained pharmacists to administer medications will eliminate barriers to accessing these vital treatments for people living with SPMI.

Early on in my career as a mental health case manager in rural Indiana, I witnessed firsthand how helpful long-acting injectable antipsychotics were for my clients with SPMI. They increased my clients overall treatment compliance and kept them from ending up in the hospital or the criminal justice system. These anecdotal experiences are supported by the data. We know that these treatments work, and improve health outcomes, reduce medical costs and enhance people's lives.

When my consumers received these injections, they did well for the two week period that the medication was active. However, there are barriers to receiving treatments during the proper intervals when transportation isn't available in remote rural areas of the state. I saw this myself when I had clients that lived an hour or more away from our center, and there weren't reliable ways to get them to the center for their injections during the proper intervals. Missing a dose of these types of long-acting

anti-psychotics for even a couple of days after they lose their efficacy is a particular problem because patients receiving these long acting injections must receive their next dose within a narrow window time in order to prevent decompensation and symptom relapse.

In conclusion, NAMI Ohio urges this committee to pass this common sense piece of legislation. As has been stated earlier, NAMI Ohio believes that HB 421 will lead to cost savings, improved health outcomes and enhanced quality of life for thousands of citizens living with severe mental illness in our state. Thank you again for the opportunity to testify. I would be happy to answer any questions that you have at this time.