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House Financial Institutions, Housing & Urban Development Committee Testimony on HB 282 -
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Thank you Chairman Dever, Vice Chairman Sprague, Ranking Minority Member Smith and distinguished members of the House Financial Institutions, Housing & Urban Development Committee for the opportunity to testify before you today on HB 282. For those of you who are not familiar with the National Alliance on Mental Illness of Ohio, we represent the voice of over 525,000 individuals in Ohio living with serious mental illness, including schizophrenia, bipolar disorder and major depression and their families.

As the State of Ohio's voice of families and people impacted by serious mental illness, we provide volunteer supports, free educational programming, and engage in advocacy related to these devastating brain illnesses.

Today, we are testifying in opposition to HB 282. As you know, HB 282 does two main things. First, it expressly prohibits criminal mischief related to residential rental property. Second, it prohibits a metropolitan housing authority from providing housing assistance to a person who has been convicted of criminal mischief relating to residential rental property.

At NAMI Ohio, our office number doubles as an informal helpline for families and individuals impacted by mental illness. In addition to assisting people with mental illness and their families, the helpline keeps NAMI Ohio staff in touch with the real experiences of families and people living with mental illness. The number one topic addressed on NAMI Ohio helpline calls involves housing.

NAMI Ohio understands how difficult managing rental property is, especially with people that may have certain special needs or health conditions. However, we still oppose this bill because it may negatively impact the ability of people with mental illness to obtain housing if their symptoms lead to crisis situations that involve property damage to their apartment while they are in a mental health crisis. The bill also may lead more people with mental illness to become further criminalized due to various circumstances associated with the symptoms of their illness. Consequently, we believe the proposed policies in this bill may be counterproductive at a time that we are directing so many resources at the local, state and federal level to the diversion of people with mental illness to treatment instead of incarceration.

On behalf of all NAMI Ohio, I thank you for giving this bill your serious consideration. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have at this time.