

NAMI Ohio SB 332 Testimony
House Finance Subcommittee on Health & Human Services
November 16, 2016

Chairman Sprague, Ranking Member Strong Sykes, and members of the House Finance Subcommittee on Health & Human Services, thank you for the opportunity to testify on Senate Bill 332. My name is Dustin McKee and I am the Director of Policy at 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. NAMI Ohio also offers support to family members and close friends with a loved one that has a serious mental illness. To do this, 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 impacted by serious mental illness.

NAMI Ohio would like to commend the sponsors of SB 332 – Senator Jones and Senator Tavares – for their tireless efforts to reduce infant mortality in our state. This bill will save lives and prevent families from experiencing the horrific trauma of losing their child in its first year of life. We would also like to thank Representative LaTourette for working to include the provisions in this bill that expand access to medication administration which originated in HB 421.

As you know, SB 332 contains countless positive measures to reduce infant mortality in Ohio, including Medicaid reforms, data collection provisions, tobacco cessation efforts, and safe sleep promotion. These components, as well as the provisions in the bill to expand access to home visiting and community hubs across Ohio will have a positive impact on the general health as well as the mental health of parents and their young children. In addition to the provisions just mentioned, NAMI Ohio is very appreciative of the language included in the bill that expands access to medication by allowing trained pharmacists the ability to administer certain injectable prescribed drugs involved in the treatment of pregnant women at high risk of complications, as well as medications used to treat severe mental illness and substance abuse. The bill does these things without granting pharmacists prescribing authority or changing ways the medicines associated with these treatments are prescribed.

As Ohio's Voice of 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. We strongly support expanding access medications, including long-acting injectable antipsychotics for people with serious mental illness. In many areas in the state, there is a shortage of professionals and treatment services needed by people with serious mental illness. Far too many patients have to travel long distances to see the psychiatrists and providers who are authorized to administer these treatments. However, most people in the state of Ohio live within five miles of a pharmacy. By allowing trained pharmacists to administer these types of medications, SB 332 will eliminate barriers to accessing vital treatments for people living with serious mental illness.

In conclusion, NAMI Ohio urges this committee to pass SB 332 without delay. The bill will save lives and enhance the 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.