



**Jack Sherman of NAMI Ohio Testimony**  
Ohio Senate Finance Subcommittee on Health & Medicaid  
*May 15, 2019*

Chairman Hackett, Vice Chair Huffman, Ranking Minority Member Thomas, Members of the Ohio House Finance Committee on Health and Medicaid, thank you for this opportunity to testify before you today. My name is Jack Sherman and I am the President of the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) Ohio Board of Directors.

Last night we conducted our Annual Meeting. Today, we have more than 300 people in the Statehouse Atrium to advocate for better mental Health System in Ohio.

I have been married for more than 36 years, and have been blessed to have both a son and a daughter. I have come to realize that my most important role as a human is being a father.

Seventeen years ago, my family's world was turned upside down. If you have not experienced the impact of mental illness on a family member, you would never realize how mean these illnesses can be.

My son is a wonderful man.

Well groomed;

Highly educated;

Articulate; and

Compassionate.

But, when he began to exhibit symptoms of a serious mental illness, we were at a complete loss for what to do.

The next 7 years were a nightmare that no one would want to live through. I would wish the experience on no one.

You see, we were forced to call the police on our own child. Our non-violent, gentle son exhibited behaviors, due to his illness, that the police would not tolerate.

It was an ugly scene that brought me to my knees.

When it became hopeless, the only alternative was to put our – now almost 30 year old – in a nursing home.

Can you imagine what that traumatic experience of having a serious mental illness and being placed in a nursing home at such a young age would be like? All through no fault of your own!



After many hospitalizations we finally found appropriate treatment including life-saving medications that stabilized my son.

He would be with me now, if not for the fact that he completed Barber School, and is at work cutting hair at this very moment.

We are so very proud of him!

However, our situation is far from over. We are now constantly on the lookout for a relapse that may occur, as it has so many times before.

The sadness that my wife Anne and I live with knowing that he will not be able to develop relationships like other young men his age can be very difficult at times. The recognition and process of accepting that this illness is life long frightens Anne and me because we don't know what will happen when we are gone.

The reason I am here testifying today, is because Governor DeWine and the Ohio House have recognized that people with mental illness can recover and be productive, tax paying citizens.

I have also learned that stigma prevents so many people from even seeking treatment.

We needed to force our son into care because he did not want to be associated with, or be seen as, an individual with a severe mental illness...an illness of the brain.

Governor DeWine and the Ohio House of Representatives have put funds into the budget for statewide treatment and prevention. They have made investments in this budget to support K-12 prevention initiatives for prevention curriculum and other quality, evidence based prevention services.

There are also funds to reduce stigma and urge our citizens to seek help early. The earlier we address mental health issues, the better chance for recovery.

Additionally, it saves the State of Ohio a tremendous amount of dollars by treating people early.

Governor DeWine's proposal also expands law enforcement training. This training emphasizes techniques allowing law enforcement to de-escalate situations similar to what my son found himself in years ago.

I can only imagine the difficulty that you, Mr. Chairman and your fellow committee members have in approving everything that everyone is asking for in this budget proposal. However, this year it is time to address a mental health system that has been less than adequate in serving the 500,000 citizens of Ohio that live, deal, and cope with a mental illness every day. My hope is that each of you feel that way too!

Please support all of the mental health initiatives in the Governor's budget.



Thank you for your time. It is an honor to be here with you now. I would be happy to answer any questions that you have at this time.