**National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) Ohio**

***Ohio Senate Health, Human Services and Medicaid Committee***

**Dustin McKee - Proponent Testimony SB 29**

February 19th, 2019

Chairman Burke, Vice Chair Huffman, Ranking Member Antonio, and members of the Ohio Senate Health, Human Services and Medicaid Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today on behalf of NAMI Ohio regarding SB 29.

My name is Dustin McKee and I am the Director of Policy for the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) of Ohio. As many of you may know, NAMI Ohio is dedicated to improving the quality of life for families, and persons impacted by serious mental illness. Across Ohio, our 40 local affiliates provide free education courses and support groups to assist people and families impacted by these devastating brain diseases. Our members and board of trustees are solely comprised of families and people directly impacted by mental illness. NAMI Ohio also works with policy makers and the public to raise awareness about mental health, destroy the stigma surrounding mental illness and enact policies that enhance the lives of families and people with serious mental illness.

As you know from Senator Dolan’s sponsor testimony, this legislation would allow Medicaid recipients with a developmental disability or serious mental illness an exemption from paying a copayment for any Medicaid service if their sole source of income is social security disability insurance (SSDI) and/or supplemental security income benefits (SSI).

Although the co-pays for Medicaid prescription drugs are relatively nominal in most cases, the operative word here is “relatively”. As little as $20-30 a month can have a significant impact if your budget is $771 per month, the SSI monthly benefit in 2019.

When I was a case manager fifteen years ago in rural Indiana, I was often reminded of how much each penny was worth to those that I served with serious mental illness. An extra dollar could be a McDonald’s hamburger lunch at the end of the month. An extra $5 could be the highlight of a person’s weekend at the minor league baseball game. Senator Dolan’s bill will allow for those simple yet impactful things in the lives of people with serious mental illness, who are already living fairly basic existences.

NAMI Ohio knows that sometimes, it is the more basic things in life that improve someone’s recovery. A little time with friends once a week at lunch or a matinee can significantly improve a person’s recovery over the long term. Senator Dolan understands this, and we appreciate the introduction of this bill and urge your support for its passage

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify before you today on SB 29. I would be happy to answer any questions that you have at this time.