



National Alliance on Mental Illness    *The State's Voice on Mental Illness*

1225 Dublin Road, Suite 125 • Columbus, Ohio 43215

September 16, 2019

Dear Chairman Eklund,

NAMI Ohio is the voice of families and people living with mental illness. We engage in education, advocacy and support to enhance the lives of people with serious mental illness and their loved ones.

We are writing you today to voice our support for Senator Gavarone's efforts to address the misdemeanor competency restoration through SB 58. NAMI Ohio has been advocating for a solution to this issue for at least 10 years. We have done so because we are reaching a point where a significant majority of the patients in Ohio's state run psychiatric hospitals are there as forensic clients admitted for competency restoration through the order of a criminal court judge rather than a civil commitment of a probate court judge. Almost half of these forensic patients referred for competency restoration committed misdemeanor crimes. As a result, access to our state run psychiatric hospital beds is rapidly diminishing.

This is a complex issue that will take significant resources and legislative finesse to be corrected. NAMI Ohio is committed to working hand in glove with Senator Gavarone, members of this committee, the Ohio General Assembly, and expert stakeholders to make sure this problem is finally solved effectively.

Ohio must find a better way to restore misdemeanants who are incompetent and do not need a hospital level of care, but do need significant residential or outpatient services. Currently, those who cannot be restored are released without any connection to treatment services after their charges are dropped. Those who are restored to competence are often released with no services due to time served during their lengthy competency restoration process.

We urge the committee to support the efforts of Senator Gavarone to address this issue in SB 58. We also applaud Senator Gavarone for her leadership on this issue.

Thank you for your consideration. Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions and I look forward to the opportunity to testify in-person during a future hearing.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Terry Russell". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, prominent initial "T".

Terry Russell  
Executive Director  
NAMI Ohio

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