

## 2022 Public Policy Priorities

NAMI Maryland advocates for the people impacted by mental illness in our state. More than 55,000 individuals, family members, caregivers, and providers support our grassroots policy and advocacy work.

### *Early Intervention*

Early intervention and treatment are essential. Since 50% of all mental illness begins by age 14, and 75% by age 24, it is critical that we promote greater awareness and early identification of mental health conditions in youth. We know children and youth with mental illness need more support in Maryland. About half of the 57,000 Marylanders aged 12–17 who have depression were unable to access treatment last year. Crisis services for children are unavailable in many parts of the state, and most children in the care of Juvenile Services have a mental illness. **We support:**

- **Expansion of Mental Health Services in K-12 Public Schools + Higher Education**
- **Fighting Stigma**
- **Youth Policy Involvement**
- **Increase of Inpatient and Outpatient Treatment Access**
- **Better Caregiver Support**
- **Housing and Employment Programs for Youth**

### *Access to Treatment and Services*

Mental health conditions are common and affect more than 781,000 people in our state. Yet, an estimated 252,000 adults in Maryland did not receive needed mental health care in the last year and more than 1 million people in Maryland live in a community that does not have enough mental health professionals. When people don't receive the mental health care they need and deserve, their conditions often worsen and have significant impacts on the individual, their family, and their community. **We support:**

- **Access to Health Coverage**
- **Peer Workforce Expansion**
- **Demand Parity Compliance**
- **Expansions to Telehealth**
- **Fully Funded Public Behavioral Health System**
- **Housing + Employment Programs**

### *Reduce Racial Health Disparities*

People with mental illness deserve to be treated with respect and dignity within their community and be provided supports that enable them to be successful in managing their mental health. NAMI advocates for inclusion and community supports that help people focus on their health and fights against discriminatory policies. In underserved areas of the state, racial health disparities make accessing mental health services nearly impossible, resulting in worse health outcomes for people with chronic conditions, substance use, and mental health disorders. **We support:**

- **Behavioral Health Focus in Health Equity Resource Communities**
- **Physical and Mental Health Integration**
- **Culturally Competent Providers**
- **Social Determinants of Health**
- **Continuity of Safety Net Programs**

### *Strengthen Maryland's Mental Health Crisis Response*

One in four individuals with a serious mental illness will be arrested during their lives. NAMI Maryland advocates for help, not handcuffs and believes that mental health emergencies deserve a mental health response. The criminalization of mental illness must stop, and diverting justice involved individuals to a health care setting is critical to supporting this work. **We support:**

- **988 Implementation and Funding**
- **Reduction of Law Enforcement Crisis Response**
- **Strong, Connected Crisis Service Systems**
- **Suicide Prevention**
- **Medicaid + Insurance Coverage for Crisis Services**
- **Modernizing the Danger Standard**