



May 27, 2009

The Honorable Debbie Stabenow
United States Senate
133 Hart Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Stabenow:

On behalf of the more than 1,100 state and local affiliates of the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI), I am pleased to offer our strong support for S 1136, your legislation to establish a new chronic care improvement demonstration for Medicaid beneficiaries living with serious mental illness. As the nation's largest organization representing people living with serious mental illness and their families, NAMI is extremely grateful for your leadership on this important public health issue.

As you know, non-elderly adults living with serious mental illness experience extremely high rates of multiple co-morbid medical conditions, including diabetes, heart disease, cancer, pulmonary disease and asthma. A 2006 study by the National Association of State Mental Health Program Directors (NASMHPD) found that these medical conditions resulted in an average life expectancy that averages 25 years below the general population in the United States – or the equivalent of an adult in Bangladesh. This is simply unacceptable and our nation needs to move forward aggressively address this public health crisis.

S 1136 is a major step forward in addressing this crisis. It authorizes a new chronic care demonstration program in Medicaid that specifically targets individuals living with serious mental illness. It will measure the effectiveness of a range of models to expand access to basic medical care for Medicaid beneficiaries living with serious mental illness – both in primary care settings and specialty mental health settings, including community mental health centers (CMHCs).

NAMI congratulates you on bringing this important legislation forward. We look forward to working with you to ensure its passage in 2009. Thank you for your leadership on behalf of people with serious mental illness and their families.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Michael J. Fitzpatrick". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Michael J. Fitzpatrick, MSW
Executive Director

cc: David Ballenberger, President, NAMI Michigan
Sherri Solomon, Executive Director, NAMI Michigan
Hubert Huebl, NAMI Michigan Board of Directors
Judy Hutchins, NAMI Northeast Michigan (Alpena)

Reimar Scholler, NAMI Washtenaw County
Larry Stahl, NAMI Tri-County (Bay City)
Edwin Gault, NAMI Mecosta County
Cindy Ojala, NAMI of Chippewa
Dan Grobbel, NAMI Macomb County
Alfred Chapman, NAMI Dearborn
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Patricia Casteel, NAMI Delta County
Ramona Deese, NAMI Genesee County
John Walker, NAMI Kent County
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Robert George, NAMI of the Blue Water (Port Huron)
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Ethel Wise, NAMI Berrien County
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