



April 11, 2024

Senate HSS Committee hearing

Senator Wilson, Chair; Senators Kaufman, Tobin, Dunbar, Giessel - members

Statement of Support for HCR 15 Resolution of Support recognizing May as Mental Health Month, and May 5-11, 2024 as Tardive Dyskinesia Week.

My name is Ann Ringstad, Executive Director for NAMI Alaska, Inc.

NAMI Alaska, the state organization of the National Alliance on Mental Illness was created in 1986 in Alaska and serves the entire state, with Affiliates in Anchorage, Fairbanks, Juneau and the North Slope. **Our mission is to eliminate the stigma of mental illness** by providing advocacy, education, support and public awareness so that all individuals and families affected by mental illness can build better lives.

I would like to point out several data points in the Resolution:

One in five adults in the United States experience serious mental illness each year. **In Alaska, is it estimated that over 108,000 adults in Alaska have a mental health condition.** These include a variety of mental health disorders and illnesses such as major depression, bipolar disorder, schizophrenia, autism spectrum disorders, and a growing number of other debilitating behavioral health conditions.

Alaskans struggle to get the help they need. More than half of people with mental health conditions in the U.S. did not receive any treatment last year. Of the 29,000 adults in Alaska who did not receive needed mental health care, over 42% did not because of cost; and

377,470 Alaska residents live in a community that does not have enough mental health professionals; and

Anyone is susceptible to experiencing mental health difficulties, just as we are susceptible to physical health issues and emergencies.

Studies suggest that between 10 – 30 percent of people who take medications to treat their mental health disorder will develop a movement disorder called Tardive Dyskinesia, also known as 'TD'. According to the National Alliance for Mental Illness, one in every four patients receiving long-term treatment with an antipsychotic medication will experience Tardive Dyskinesia.

Thank you for hearing this resolution. It increases awareness about mental illness, and encourages all of us to recognize the challenges of those affected by mental health issues, helping to overcome **and end the stigma of mental illness.**