

## **2023 LEGISLATIVE AGENDA**

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NAMI Tennessee is the state organization of the National Alliance on Mental Illness, a grassroots organization dedicated to building better lives for individuals and families affected by mental illness.

The NAMI Tennessee Legislative Agenda outlines key objectives and accompanying policy positions that support our goal of ensuring that people with mental illness receive the treatment and supports necessary to lead full and satisfying lives as valued members of the community.

**The legislation below reflects NAMI Tennessee priorities of access to quality mental health care and treatment with dignity.**

### **PTSD Treatment for Firefighters – SUPPORT**

*SB 856 by Sen. Paul Bailey (R-Sparta)/HB 976 by Rep. Johnny Garrett (R-Goodlettsville)*

This bill (called the James “Dustin” Samples Act) recognizes the cumulative effect of job-related stressors and potential for suicide among firefighters and requires their Worker’s Compensation insurance to cover treatment for PTSD.

### **Second certification – PENDING**

*SB 672 by Sen. Shane Reeves (R-Murfreesboro)/ HB 105 by Rep. Kevin Vaughan (R-Collierville)*

This bill allows a nurse practitioner or physician’s assistant at a hospital or treatment center to be one of the two professionals needed to complete a “certificate of need” if a person is admitted and detained by a hospital or treatment resource for emergency diagnosis, evaluation, and treatment. However, the bill lifts the second certification currently required by law in non-public hospitals and treatment centers.

*Note: we anticipate an amendment will be filed to address concerns by NAMI Tennessee and other groups that will allow us to support this bill.*

### **Emergency Room Beds -- SUPPORT**

*SB 866 by Sen. Shane Reeves (R-Murfreesboro)/ HB 827 by Rep. Mike Sparks (R-Smyrna)*

This bill is expected to be amended to include language addressing the backlog of individuals in a mental health crisis that are detained in hospital emergency rooms while waiting for beds in a psychiatric facility.

### **Save Tennessee Students Act – SUPPORT**

*SB 350 by Sen. Heidi Campbell (D-Nashville)/HB 294 by Rep. Bob Freeman (D-Nashville)*

This bill expands the Save Tennessee Students Act to require public institutions of higher education that issue new student identification cards to include contact information for certain crisis and suicide prevention lifelines on the cards and post the contact information in a conspicuous place on each campus.

### **Veterans' Bill of Rights -- SUPPORT**

*SB 376 by Sen. Heidi Campbell (D-Nashville)/HB 446 by Rep. Ronnie Glynn (D-Clarksville)*

Among efforts to assist veterans with education, housing and employment opportunities, this bill instructs the state Department of Veterans Affairs to look at ways to help veterans and their families access mental health treatment and services. It creates a mental health navigator program; requires the department to work with stakeholder groups to identify barriers and community-based approaches to care; creates a centralized database of providers including those specializing in suicide prevention.

### **Homelessness/Housing -- OPPOSE**

*SB 1334 by Sen. Paul Bailey (R-Sparta)/HB 1192 by Rep. Ryan Williams (R-Cookeville)*

This bill allows the Tennessee Housing Development Agency to create state-sanctioned camps for homeless individuals to stay for up to two years. This bill would make it easier for homeless individuals to be involuntarily committed, including those individuals "in remission" from mental illness.

### **Mental Illness/Change in wording -- SUPPORT**

*SB 553 by Sen. Heidi Campbell (D-Nashville)/ HB 305 by Rep. Justin Jones (D-Nashville)*

This bill deletes the words "a mental defective" in various places in Tennessee Code Annotated dealing with mental health laws and replaces them with "person with a mental health condition." Also changes the words "mental condition" to a "mental health condition."

### **Education/Mechanical restraints -- OPPOSE**

*SB 141 by Sen. Bo Watson (R-Hixson)/HB 127 by Rep. Greg Martin (R-Hixson)*

This bill allows a school resource officer, school security officer, or other law enforcement officer who is trained and certified for completing a behavior intervention training program to use a mechanical restraint on a student receiving special education services in an emergency situation.