

 **NAMI** of **MASSACHUSETTS**
The National Alliance for the Mentally Ill of Massachusetts
400 West Cummings Park • Suite 6650 • Woburn, MA 01801

April 6, 2004

Re: H444, A Constitutional Amendment Relative to the Provision of Health Insurance

Dear Committee Members,

On behalf of the National Alliance for the Mentally Ill of Massachusetts, I strongly advocate for *A Constitutional Amendment Relative to the Provision of Health Insurance*. Massachusetts must ensure that all residents have access to essential health and mental health care services, including prescription medications and medical supplies.

It is imperative that the Commonwealth improve access to mental health treatment, assure positive outcomes associated with early diagnosis and treatment, and provide access to a full range of evidence-based practices. These measures will improve communities' overall health, education, business, and public safety.

Half a century of inadequate mental health policy has failed people with serious mental disorders and now compels community leaders to act. This public health crisis is having devastating effects on education, law enforcement, health care, and business in every community. One in five families in Massachusetts is affected by mental illness. Over 44,000 adults in Massachusetts need publicly funded mental health services, yet over 22,000 are desperately waiting. We must act now.

Again, I urge you to support this constitutional amendment -- health care and mental health care should be a constitutional right for the citizens of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

Sincerely,


Toby Fisher, M.B.A./M.S.W.
Executive Director