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October 29th, 2014

RE: NAMI California Endorses Proposition 47--The Safe Neighborhoods and Schools Act

Dear NAMI California Members, Partners and Supporters:

NAMI California is pleased to announce our strong endorsement of Proposition 47, which will change sentencing for low-level nonviolent crimes such as simple drug possession and petty theft from felonies to misdemeanors and direct financial savings to K-12 schools, mental health treatment, and victim services.

It is predicted that the changes resulting from Proposition 47 will result in California counties saving hundreds of millions annually and state prison reductions will generate between \$750 million to \$1.25 billion in savings over the next five years alone.

The proposition will direct “65 percent of those funds...to the Board of State and Community Corrections, to administer a grant program to public agencies aimed at supporting *mental health treatment*, substance abuse treatment, and *diversion* programs for people in the criminal justice system, with an emphasis on programs that *reduce recidivism* of people convicted of less serious crimes, such as those covered by this measure, and those who have substance abuse and mental health problems.”

Based on the estimates above, Proposition 47 will result in an investment in mental health treatment, substance abuse treatment, and diversion programs of \$487.5 million over the next 5 years, or \$97.5 million annually.

Proposition 47 moves California closer to a system that puts treatment before incarceration, providing California’s most vulnerable population with needed services and the hope for recovery. We can think of no better investment of these cost saving, as more individuals receiving treatment instead of incarceration will result in further costs savings through reducing recidivism and rates of incarceration.

Proposition 47 greatly advances NAMI California’s hope for significant reforms in the treatment of persons living with mental illness by the criminal justice system.

NAMI California
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If passed, we have faith that the Board of State and Community Corrections will have an open, public process for distributing these funds and implement strong oversight over spending to ensure that the monies are used for the appropriate purposes. Mental health advocacy organizations should be involved in developing the regulations for administering these grants.

NAMI California is the State's organization of the country's largest mental health advocacy organization, the National Alliance on Mental Illness. Our 19,000 members and 67 affiliates include many people living with serious mental illnesses, their families and supporters. NAMI California advocates on their behalf, providing education and support to its members and the broader community. Given the substantial and unfortunate connection between a lack of mental health treatment and incarceration, our members include individuals who have interacted with the criminal justice system or have family members with a mental illness who are currently or previously incarcerated persons.

We hope you will join us in supporting this important proposition by voting "YES" on Proposition 47.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jessica Cruz". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name and last name clearly distinguishable.

Jessica Cruz, MPA/HS

Executive Director

NAMI California