

March 25, 2021

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The Honorable Autumn Burke
Chair, Assembly Committee on Revenue & Taxation
State Capitol, Room 5150
Sacramento, CA 95814

**AB 1065 (Maienschein) Personal income taxes: voluntary contributions:
Mental Health Help Program Voluntary Tax Contribution Fund –
SUPPORT**

Dear Assembly Member Burke:

On behalf of the National Alliance on Mental Illness - California (NAMI-CA), I am writing to request your support for AB 1065 (Maienschein), which creates the Mental Health Help Program that aids in training law enforcement officers to assist, and engage safely with, people living with a mental illness and allows taxpayers to make voluntary contributions to the fund on their California tax returns.

NAMI-CA is the statewide affiliate of the country's largest mental health advocacy organization, the National Alliance on Mental Illness. Our over 110,000 active advocates and 62 affiliates include many people living with serious mental illnesses, their families, and supporters. NAMI-CA advocates on their behalf, providing education and support to its members and the broader community.

The Mental Health Help Program will fund NAMI CA's Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) program which is a national model for community policing that brings together law enforcement, mental health providers, hospital emergency departments, and individuals with mental illness and their families to aid and improve law enforcement's response to those experiencing a mental health crisis. NAMI CA has helped train over 10,000 law enforcement personnel in California.

The CIT programs enhance communication and identify mental health resources for assisting persons in crisis and ensure that law enforcement, which usually is the first responder, has all the education and tools to safely resolve the crisis. NAMI CA's CIT programs provide law enforcement with intensive training, including:

- Learning from individuals and families impacted by mental illness, mental health professionals and experienced officers in the community.
- Verbal and non-verbal de-escalation skills.
- Scenario-based training on responding to mental health crises.

The CIT program gives law enforcement tools to perform their job more effectively and, most importantly, safely. It helps keep people living with a mental illness out of jail, off the streets and enrolled into treatment where they are more likely to get on the road to recovery.

One of the more alarming statistics from the U.S. Department of Justice is that nearly 1 in 4 people shot and killed by law enforcement between 2015-2020 had a mental health condition. This, alone, is why NAMI CA's Mental Health Help

Program is needed.

We understand that the Committee on Revenue and Taxation has a policy of not renewing those voluntary contribution fund programs which did not achieve the minimum. However, NAMI CA



NAMI California

National Alliance on Mental Illness

achieved contributions of 85% (\$214,000) of the minimum last year, during which the COVID pandemic impacted our economy.

Last year, over 12 million people took an extension to file their 2019 tax returns. The COVID pandemic has had a significant impact upon tax returns. Additionally, those who live with a mental illness still face the stigma of the disease. This, along with the extenuating circumstances of the pandemic, may have contributed to not achieving the minimum. NAMI CA is quite confident that it will not only achieve, but surpass, the minimum in the coming years.

We respectfully ask for your consideration in allowing NAMI CA's Mental Health Help Program to continue.

I may be reached at jessica@namica.org or (916) 567-0163 with any questions you may have. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Jessica Cruz, MPA/HS
Chief Executive Officer