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April 14, 2021

The Honorable Sydney Kamlager
California State Senator
California State Capitol, Room 4062
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: AB 118 (Kamlager) Emergency services: community response: grant program – SUPPORT

Dear Senator Kamlager:

On behalf of the National Alliance on Mental Illness - California (NAMI-CA), I am writing to express support of your AB 118, the Community Response Initiative to Strengthen Emergency Systems (CRISES) Act.

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.

AB 118 would fund the California Office of Emergency Services to make grants to community organizations to expand their roles in emergency response involving a variety of considerably vulnerable populations, including people facing mental health crises. A mental health crisis is any situation in which a person's behavior puts them at risk of hurting themselves or others and/or prevents them from being able to care for themselves or function effectively in the community. Many things can lead to a mental health crisis, such as home, environmental, school, work, or other stressors. A person experiencing a mental health crisis can't always clearly communicate their thoughts, feelings, needs or emotions. They may also find it difficult to understand what others are saying.

When a mental health crisis occurs, friends and family are often caught off-guard, unprepared, and unsure of what to do. NAMI-CA believes law enforcement – particularly those specially trained to de-escalate mental health crises – are an invaluable partner in keeping our loved ones safe. However, many lack the training or expertise to employ tools aside from use of force when encountering people who may appear agitated, afraid, or uncooperative due to a mental health emergency.

AB 118 recognizes that people in crisis and their loved ones should have safe options when seeking emergency help. This can include Crisis Intervention Trained law enforcement officer response, team-based models that include clinicians and law enforcement, and innovative models employing community-based organizations that specialize in safely assisting an individual and family experiencing a mental health crisis.



NAMI California

National Alliance on Mental Illness

For these reasons, NAMI-CA is pleased to support AB 118. I may be reached at jessica@namica.org or (916) 567-0163 with any questions you may have. Thank you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Jessica Cruz', is positioned below the word 'Sincerely,'.

Jessica Cruz, MPA/HS
Chief Executive Officer