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March 22, 2021

The Honorable Steve Glazer
California State Senator
California State Capitol, Room 5108
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: SB 21 (Glazer): Specialized license plates: mental health awareness – SUPPORT

Dear Senator Glazer:

On behalf of the National Alliance on Mental Illness - California (NAMI-CA), I am writing to express support of your SB 21 to develop a statewide mental health awareness license plate program.

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.

SB 21 requires the California Department of Education (CDE) to apply to the California Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) to establish a mental health awareness license plate program. The license plates would feature a mental health awareness message, such as "You Are Not Alone." When drivers purchase these specialized mental health awareness license plates, the extra fees they pay will help fund CDE's critical work to provide mental health services in California's public schools. In addition to promoting mental health awareness among all Californians, this special license plate will help schools to support their students.

Children and youth are experiencing escalating mental health needs and face numerous barriers to accessing care and support. Early data indicate that the COVID-19 public health emergency is further exacerbating children's mental health needs. For example, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reported that beginning in April 2020, the proportion of mental-health related emergency department visits among all pediatric emergency department visits increased by 24% for children ages 5-11 and by 31% for children ages 12-17. Now more than ever, our public schools deserve our support so they can meet the rising mental health crisis among California's public school students.

For these reasons, NAMI-CA is pleased to support SB 21. 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