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NAMI National Blasts Illinois Leaders for “Cruel” Cuts in Mental Health Services; “More People Will Die”

Springfield, IL—The National Alliance on Mental Illness’ national Executive Director, Michael J. Fitzpatrick joined NAMI Illinois today in a statement denouncing proposed budget cuts for mental health care services in the state.

“The proposed cuts to date are specious and cruel,” Fitzpatrick said. “The governor and legislature are seeking to use the budget crisis as an excuse for a lack of commitment to some of the state’s most vulnerable citizens.”

“Long before the budget crisis began, Illinois languished near the bottom in providing an adequate, effective mental health care system,” Fitzpatrick said, referring to NAMI’s comprehensive national report, *Grading the States*, published over the past three years to measure progress based on presidential commission recommendations. See www.nami.org/grades09.

“In 2006, Illinois received an F. In 2009, it barely received a D. Any progress that was made over the last three years now stands to be destroyed.”

“Illinois citizens deserve better. All Americans expect better from one of the country’s largest states, with one of our greatest cities, and some of our greatest universities and other institutions.”

“Be forewarned. More people inevitably will die on the street or from suicide if the proposed cuts are adopted,” Fitzpatrick said.

At a time when there has never been more hope for recovery from mental illnesses, “Illinois has moved backwards – not by chance – but by choice,” added NAMI Illinois Board President, Verla Demopoulos. “Community mental health services are cost-effective, humane and they work. Through them, Illinois can avoid the infinitely higher long-term costs of jails, prisons and nursing homes.”

Until Illinois adopts a recovery-oriented mental health budget, many of Illinois’ citizens will remain stranded. Legislators have to make tough decisions every day; in this case it’s time to invest in people and recognize that there is no health without mental health.

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