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Memo of Support

To: Members of the NYS Senate Labor and Mental Health Committees

Re: S-3004, an act to amend the workers' compensation law and the insurance law, in relation to providing benefits for injury or sickness, pregnancy or family leave

The National Alliance on Mental Illness-New York State (NAMI-NYS) strongly believes that recovery from psychiatric disorders happen best when the patients, their doctors and family members work together and form a "recovery team." Eliminating barriers to family participation in recovery has always been central to NAMI-NYS's mission.

Medical emergencies and chronic long-term illnesses, whether they be physical or psychiatric are traumatic both for the patient and his or her family. No one should have to face an illness or travel the road of recovery alone. The strength and support of family members play a crucial in overcoming an illness. Obviously, finances and employment are important, but family should always come first. No one should have to choose between his or her livelihood and caring for a sick family member.

Many of our NAMI-NYS families serve as the primary caregiver for their loved one living with a mental illness, in many cases with the loved one living in the same home as the caregiver. This also places an economic burden on our families and speaks to why it is so important they receive a suitable wage to provide this crucial care. This is why is necessary for low income workers to receive 2/3 of their salary while on leave

It is also important to note that family involvement in recovery will help prevent negative outcomes that our costly to tax-payers such as emergency room visits and long-term hospital stays which mostly get billed to Medicaid or Medicare.

This is why NAMI-NYS strongly supports S-3004 which would provide up to twelve weeks of paid family leave to care for sick family members, after the birth of a child or if a loved one is facing military deployment. California has demonstrated that this type of program can be successful; the Assembly has already passed this bill and Governor Cuomo has stated his staunch support for the initiative. It is clear that the time is now to support New York's families by passing S-3004.

NAMI-NYS urges you to support S-3004. For more information please contact NAMI-NYS at 518-462-2000.