



New York State

Statement on Paid Family Leave in the New York State Budget

The National Alliance on Mental Illness-New York State (NAMI-NYS) applauds Governor Cuomo and the New York State Legislature on agreeing to include paid family leave in the state budget. This will have a tremendous impact on many New York families who care for sick relatives.

NAMI-NYS is the state chapter of NAMI, the nation's largest grassroots family and consumer movement dedicated to improving the lives of those with mental illness and was founded by families with loved ones with serious and persistent mental illnesses with the design to provide support and education to other families impacted by mental illness. Many NAMI families serve as the primary caregivers to their loved ones with these chronic diseases and have had to sacrifice a great deal to support their recovery, all too often at the expense of careers and salary.

No one should have to give up a career and financial security in order to do the right thing and care for loved ones. Psychiatric emergencies can strike at any time and any place. We have heard many horror stories of people having to travel across the country to be with their family member in crisis and how this has cost them their job. The period of following the release from a psychiatric hospitalization is also a particularly vulnerable time for the individual with a mental illness and around the clock family support is often needed in this period of adjustment and reintegration. The role of family during this time is vital as they are often needed to ensure adherence to medicine and coordinate the multitude of doctor visits.

In New York family support is needed more than ever as the budget agreement failed to make the necessary investments in supported housing with wrap-around services and community supports to advance recovery from psychiatric disorders in the community. With these shortfalls, families typically serve as the primary resource used to bridge these gaps in services and they need to be able to serve in this capacity without having to fear for their livelihood. This is also important as many of families support their loved ones financially and a loss of income can be disastrous.

It is clear that families play a crucial role and often underappreciated role in recovery. We are extremely grateful that New York has agreed to care for caregivers by enacting a paid family leave initiative in New York.