

NAMI Massachusetts Campaign for the Mind of America Press Conference Agenda

April 28, 2004

11:00 a.m.	Phil Hadley, President, NAMI Massachusetts Opening Remarks
11:02 a.m.	Mike Fitzpatrick, Executive Director, NAMI Report on the status of Maine's MH System
11:10 a.m.	Representative Peter J. Koutoujian, Chair, Health Care Committee, Massachusetts House of Representatives
11:13 a.m.	Mark Pearlmutter, M.D., Chief of Emergency Medicine, Caritas Emergency Medical Group, American College of Emergency Physicians
11:16 a.m.	Judge Maurice Richardson, Director of Diversion Resource Center, Assistant Professor, University of Massachusetts Medical School
11:19 a.m.	Howard Trachtman BS, NAMI National Consumer Council Executive Committee
11:22 a.m.	Paula Georges, Ph.D., Boston Public Health Commission, National Association of County and City Health Officials
11:25 a.m.	Roberta Hurtig, Executive Director, Samaritans of Boston
11:28 a.m.	Allison Bauer, JD, LICSW, Director of Professional Issues, National Association of Social Workers
11:32 a.m.	Toby Fisher, Executive Director, NAMI Massachusetts

Statements

"Thank you for your support of today's NAMI Massachusetts Campaign for the Mind of America launch. Having this turnout is gratifying to NAMI and shows that **COMMUNITY LEADERS** understand first-hand the urgent needs of people with mental illness in Massachusetts.

The Campaign for the Mind of America is a multi-year national and state-level initiative to increase access to mental health treatment and services and **show the effects of untreated mental illness on every community**. The campaign works to create unique partnerships between those acting **as the front line** in the current mental health treatment systems crisis—law enforcement, healthcare, educations, and business.

Today, here in the statehouse of Massachusetts, I am joined by the NAMI National Executive Director, Mike Fitzpatrick, who will present the just-released report on *The State of Mental Health in Massachusetts* which provides an assessment of the true picture of the system. I am also honored to be joined today by representatives of community leaders who will speak briefly on **the real cost to the communities of untreated mental disorders.**

I am pleased to first introduce..... prior to Mike Fitzpatrick's role as the Executive Director of NAMI National, Mike Fitzpatrick was the Director of NAMI's Policy Research Institute. Mike is a past member of the Maine House of Representatives where he served as House Chair of the Health and Human Services Committee. While serving in the legislature he authored numerous pieces of legislation on issues ranging from governmental reorganization to behavioral health to child welfare and welfare reform. Mike resides in Maine and travels to Arlington, Virginia to the national headquarters weekly as well as to states across the country speaking on issues on behalf of people living with mental illness.

-- Phil Hadley, President, NAMI Massachusetts

"The state of Massachusetts should prescribe and fund a system of care that ensures access to treatment and services for Massachusetts' citizens living with mental illness which includes access to outpatient medical care, access to appropriate medications, and family and peer support. These are evidence-based, proven treatment models that are cost-effective; by adequately funding and supporting access to these upstream services and supports, the budget and the consumer will be spared more costly and less-effective downstream consequences such as crisis care and hospitalization. Decisions about care for mental illness, including decisions on prescribing medications that are **safe and effective and improve patient care as well as provide COST EFFECTIVENESS**, should be made by the consumers and their doctors, not by bureaucrats not connected to the community or to the consumers' lives."

-- Mike Fitzpatrick, Executive Director, NAMI National

"Overcrowding in Emergency Departments is the biggest issue affecting hospitals in Massachusetts. When access to less-costly and crisis-preventing services are not available, predictable if the state's policy makers continue to ignore the consequence of previous years' cuts and continue to under fund the system, people with mental illness turn up in emergency rooms. Not only does this result in HIGHER costs to the state, but it also results in delays to care and threatens all patients' health. The price of failed mental health policies will exasperate this situation, and Massachusetts citizens will find that they simply do not have access to emergency care when needed."

-- Mark Pearlmutter, M.D., American College of Emergency Physicians

"Leaders and citizens in communities across the state of Massachusetts are confronted daily with the challenges that untreated mental illness place on those in our judicial system. As a judge, I have witnessed first hand evidence of our neglect of people with mental illness in our courtrooms—people who need housing, medications, and employment, not incarceration. As a society, we can and must do better. We cannot afford as a state to neglect leadership and continue to inadequately support services for people with mental illness.

-- Judge Maurice Richardson

"Treatment for mental illness works, and Maine's Medicaid program is essential to ensuring that people with mental illness have access to life saving medical care. Cost cutting and managing care for people living with mental illness usually means we do not get help. When you look at our partners here today, you can see what happens. Consumers understand that **COMPETENT access to mental health treatment and services in Medicaid is a win-win** that would remove the consequence of untreated mental disorders on the rest of the community while giving individuals in the opportunity to become productive, working citizens of their communities."

-- Howard Trachtman, BS, NAMI National Consumer Council Executive Committee

"We understand that our governor and legislators have tough budget decisions to make, but the **County and City Health Officials need them to make SMART choices**. When the mental health system is not accessible to the people who need it, the health of all of our communities suffers and the costs to community health increase, driving the county budget in return. Downstream, the state's budget proposals and consequences of the cuts of the last three years will not save money at all."

-- Paula Georges, Ph.D., Director, Child & Adolescent Mental Health, Boston Public Health Commission "Our nation is experiencing a public health crisis in youth suicide - the third leading cause of death among 10-24 year olds nationwide and the second leading cause in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. Depression is the leading reason children age 6-17 are hospitalized; in fact, mental illnesses represent 6 of the 10 leading diagnoses for inpatient hospitalizations of youth age 13-17. And, these rates are increasing. Hospitalizations of children for mental illnesses increased 12% between 2001 and 2002 alone. Clearly, children are not receiving the help they need when they need it and where they need it. We would NEVER wait to treat a child who cut her finger until it became infected, but that's what we are doing for children with mental and emotional challenges. It is time to recognize what is happening and fix our system in Massachusetts, and the policy maker's proposals must be altered to ensure the safety of Massachusetts children."

-- Roberta Hurtig, Executive Director, Samaritans of Boston

"Social workers routinely witness the devastating impact faced by people with mental illness when they do not have adequate access to services. NASW believes that Massachusetts needs to appropriate sufficient funds in order to ensure that every Massachusetts citizen has access to a comprehensive system to screen and treat mental illness. All people should have the opportunity to meet their basic human needs, including access to proper mental health services or substance abuse treatment."

-- Allison Bauer, JD, LICSW, Director of Professional Issues, Massachusetts Chapter of the National Association of Social Workers

"The recently released House budget restores vital research funding and provides crucial funding for under paid mental health workers, yet there is still a dire shortage of mental health services. Chronically mentally ill citizens still languish waiting for community based services, wander our streets homeless, fill up emergency rooms when preventive treatment should have been provided, and needlessly end up in the criminal justice system. This is a human travesty that is avoidable with adequate funding and services. Treatment means the difference between hope and despair, struggle and recovery, and even life and death. Limiting mental health treatment does not save tax payers dollars. Instead we are left with tragic unintended consequences and cost shifting. Massachusetts must be a model for the nation. In the long run, it serves all the state's interests"

-- Toby Fisher, Executive Director, NAMI Massachusetts