

**Testimony of the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) of Connecticut
before the Joint Committee on Labor and Public Employees**

March 12, 2013

IN SUPPORT OF

**Proposed House Bill 6553: An Act Establishing a Task Force to Study Family Medical Leave
Insurance**

Senator Osten, Representative Tercyak and members of the Joint Committee on Labor and Public Employees, my name is Sara Frankel and I am the Public Policy Director for Children, Youth and Young Adults with the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) of Connecticut. NAMI Connecticut is the state affiliate of NAMI, the nation's largest grassroots mental health organization dedicated to building better lives for all those affected by mental illness. NAMI Connecticut offers support groups across the state, educational programs, and advocacy for improved services, more humane treatment and an end to stigma and economic and social discrimination. We represent individuals who actually live with mental illness and parents and family members of individuals living with mental illness. I am here today on behalf of NAMI Connecticut to testify in support of both HB 6553.

HB 6553 would establish a Task Force to study how Connecticut can establish an insurance program to provide short-term benefits to workers who are unable to work due to pregnancy or the birth of a child; a non-work related illness or injury; or the need to care for a seriously ill child, spouse or parent. NAMI Connecticut supports the work of this proposed Task Force, specifically as it relates to providing short-term benefits to workers who need to care for a seriously ill child, spouse or parent as well as for individuals who live with a serious mental illness.

Mental illness exists in every state, every city and every neighborhood of the U.S. One in four adults—nearly 60 million Americans—experiences a mental health disorder in a given year. One in 17 lives with serious mental illness, and one in 10 children lives with a serious mental or emotional disorder. Family Medical Leave Insurance would provide relief for individuals living with mental illness to take the time they need to manage their illness while at the same time maintaining their place of employment.

Families affected by mental illness also need our help. Millions of Americans face the day-to-day reality of caring for a family member living with mental illness. It can be overwhelming. The reality is that when families get support—from many directions and programs—outcomes in all areas are improved. Family Medical Leave Insurance would provide support for a parent caring for a child, spouse or parent living with a serious mental illness and at the same time improve outcomes for the child, spouse or parent living with a mental illness.