

Laurie Emerson, Executive Director
National Alliance on Mental Illness of Vermont
March 21, 2023

Dear Green Mountain Care Board,

The National Alliance on Mental Illness of Vermont (NAMI Vermont) supports the flexibility for the University of Vermont Health Network to invest the \$18 million on mental health needs. We strongly urge the Board to consider supporting a 24-hour crisis stabilization (adult and youth) unit/facility in our most populated Chittenden County. Individuals are not getting the right care at the right time in the right environment. There are major gaps and barriers accessing treatment. We need to strive for a preventative approach that includes:

1. **Someone to call** – 988 is now available 24/7 in our state.
2. **Someone to respond** – mobile crisis response is beginning to be established in the state, but is not 24/7.
3. **Somewhere to go** – 24 hr. crisis stabilization facilities – we need to divert people away from the emergency department and intervene earlier with immediate access to care and treatment. There should be “no wrong door”. Right now, the emergency department is the ONLY place to go 24/7 – we need to change this.

Additionally, we need parity in financing psychiatric care. Psychiatry should not have to operate at a loss. We need to prioritize mental health care and funding – at the same rate as we do for physical health care. Parity also includes that both mental health and physical health be integrated. We need embrace integration and reimagine our health care system.

Thank you for listening to our comments.

Respectfully Submitted,



Laurie Emerson, Executive Director
NAMI Vermont

NAMI Vermont is the independent Vermont chapter of the National Alliance on Mental Illness. We are a statewide, non-profit, 501c3, grassroots, volunteer organization comprised of people who live with a mental health condition, family members, and advocates. As our mission, NAMI Vermont supports, educates and advocates so that all communities, families, and individuals affected by mental illness or mental health challenges can build better lives.