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For Immediate Release:

Statement by NAMI Florida on Florida's Mental Health Care

Tallahassee, FL (February 22, 2018) – As the state's largest grassroots organization for individuals and families affected by mental illness, NAMI Florida has become increasingly concerned about the recent dialogue around violence and mental illness.

One in five people, including children and youth, have or will experience a mental illness. The vast majority of people with mental illness are not violent. In fact, people with mental illness are more likely to be the victims of violence. Research on the relationship between mental illness and violence shows that there are certain factors that may increase risks of violence among a small number of individuals with mental illness. These factors include:

- Co-occurring abuse of alcohol or illegal drugs
- Being young and male
- Untreated psychosis
- Past history of violence – which is a more robust predictor of violent behavior than all the risks listed above.

The best way to reduce these risks of violence is through early identification and treatment. Yet fewer than one-third of adults and half of children with a diagnosed mental illness receive mental health services in a given year.

NAMI Florida urges Governor Rick Scott and the Florida Legislature to champion the following initiatives before the end of the 2018 legislative session:

- **Treatment for early psychosis:** NAMI Florida recommends enhancing Governor Scott's proposal to treat individuals experiencing the warning signs of early psychosis to \$4.6 million.
- **In-school public awareness programs:** NAMI Florida recommends funding for public awareness programs, such as NAMI's Ending the Silence program. Ending the Silence is a program conducted by an adult and a youth in recovery from a mental health condition. The presentations inform students, parents, teachers, and staff about the identifying signs of a mental health condition, and ways to seek help.
- **School-linked mental health programs:** NAMI Florida recommends new policies to empower schools to partner with community providers to conduct mental health screenings for all students in a way that identifies those students at-risk for or exhibiting a mental health condition and refers them to community resources.

Moving forward, our hope is that our Florida policymakers will engage in an ongoing dialogue around mental health service access for the children and families who need it—rather than divisive dialogue that perpetuates the stigma against individuals with a mental health condition.

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About NAMI Florida: NAMI Florida is the state affiliate of the National Alliance on Mental Illness with headquarters in Tallahassee, Florida. With twenty-seven affiliates in communities across Florida, NAMI provides education, advocacy, and support groups for people with mental illnesses and their loved ones. NAMI Florida works with state and federal agencies and elected officials to promote recovery and improved treatment for individuals who have a mental illness and their families. NAMI Florida also works collaboratively with other statewide organizations to achieve a better mental health system for all Florida’s citizens. To learn more about NAMI Florida, visit www.namiflorida.org.