



Dear Members of the House Health and Human Services Committee:

NAMI Colorado, the National Alliance on Mental Illness offers its support of SB 26-031. As the largest grassroots organization for mental health, we believe that all people with mental health conditions deserve access to effective medication and treatment options. NAMI appreciates and supports public policies that advance, rather than limit, access to prescription mental health medications as prescribed by their provider.

Access to effective prescription medications is essential for many people with mental illness to successfully manage their condition and get on a path of recovery. Nearly 1 in 5 adults take prescribed medication for their mental health. While medication may not be part of every individual's treatment plan, it can be an important tool for managing symptoms, allowing an individual to stay engaged in or return to daily life activities or increase their engagement in psychotherapy.

When used as clinically directed, and with FDA approval, mental health medications are safe, effective, and often lifesaving, helping improve a person's quality of life. Decisions on what – if any – medication a person takes for their mental health condition should be based on clinical need, evidence, and the informed decision-making process between an individual and their provider.

When medications are restricted – either by policy or by cost – it can jeopardize the health and well-being of a person with mental illness. Policies that restrict mental health medications, such as prescribing restrictions, increase stigma around mental health conditions, which in turn may discourage people from seeking mental health resources.

As more innovation leads to controlled substances in prescription products, it is essential to build on credible, evidence-based, and potential benefits these products have on people with mental health conditions. Lack of access to mental health medications can worsen symptoms and lead to a greater likelihood of emergency room visits, hospitalizations, suicidal ideation, homelessness, and incarceration. By removing arbitrary barriers to medications, like this bill will streamline, we can ensure access to the full range of treatment options – consistent with national policy – that can improve mental health outcomes for millions of people affected by mental illness from the Western Slope to the Eastern Plains and up and down the I-25 corridor. Coloradans across our 64 counties will be grateful for your affirmative vote on this bill.

Thank you for your consideration.

**Ray Merenstein**  
Executive Director  
NAMI Colorado