The Nation's Voice on Mental Illness

March 30, 2009

The Honorable Chris Murphy
The Honorable Judy Biggert
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representatives Murphy & Biggert:

On behalf of the 210,000 members and 1,200 affiliates of the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI), I am writing to offer our strong support for the Frank Melville Supportive Housing Investment Act of 2009 (HR 1675). As the nation's largest organization representing people with serious mental illness and their families, NAMI thanks you and your colleagues for bringing this bipartisan legislation forward.

As you know, Section 811 is a critical affordable housing resource for non-elderly people with severe disabilities. While the program has been effective in developing permanent supportive housing, improvements are needed. HR 1675 will streamline and simplify the existing process by which 811 sponsors compete for new projects. It will also reform Section 811 and create an important demonstration program to allow for investment of new capital resources from programs such as the Low-Income Housing Tax Credit and HOME in supportive housing developments. Finally HR 1675 would resolve the current threat to the program from the Section 811 "mainstream" voucher program.

Finally, we would like to express our gratitude for your naming this legislation in honor of the late Frank Melville, a member of NAMI's Connecticut affiliate, and leader in promoting permanent supportive housing as an effective and humane strategy for improving the lives of individuals with severe disabilities and those experiencing chronic homelessness. NAMI looks forward to working with you to achieve passage in the 111th Congress.

Sincerely,

Michael J. Fitzpatrick, M.S.W.
Executive Director

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