



Senate Judiciary Committee

Testimony on HCR 5032

March 12, 2012

Presented by:
Rick Cagan, Executive Director

NAMI Kansas is a statewide grassroots membership organization dedicated to improving the lives of individuals with mental illness. Our members are individuals who are living with mental illnesses and the family members who provide care and support. NAMI Kansas provides peer support through a statewide network of local affiliates. We sponsor educational programs targeted at consumers of mental health services, their family members, and the general public. We advocate for individuals who are living with mental illness to ensure their access to treatment and supportive services.

We appreciate your consideration of this resolution as a means of recognizing an effective, voluntary program which contributes to public safety and the decriminalization of mental illnesses and which encourages the expansion of this international program on a statewide basis. One of the objectives of law enforcement based Crisis Intervention Teams (CIT) is to divert individuals with serious mental illness from the criminal justice system and move them toward treatment programs.

Significant numbers of individuals living with serious mental illness experience encounters with law enforcement agencies and end up in the criminal justice system where the recognition and treatment of mental illness is not the primary mission.

As stated in the resolution, established CIT programs are operating in six localities, in addition to a number of officers from around the state who have also been trained through the Kansas Law Enforcement Training Center. Our organization provides staff support to a CIT Leadership Group which is helping to promote and grow the program and in sponsoring an annual CIT Summit.

CIT represents a successful collaboration between law enforcement, community mental health centers and grassroots advocates from NAMI and other organizations. CIT is a positive diversion program for Kansas communities and more programs like these are needed to develop alternatives to

incarceration for individuals living with serious mental illnesses. Thank you for the opportunity to present this testimony for the Committee's consideration and for your support of this resolution.