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Senator Tony Rand
300-C Legislative Office Bldg
Raleigh, NC 27603-5925

Dear Senator Rand,

In the media and in SB 799, incidents and deaths at 24 hour mental health facilities and hospitals are finally being given some of the scrutiny and attention they deserve. NAMI NC applauds this transparency, within the bounds of human dignity. Withholding the names of the person with mental illness without permission of family members is a reasonable measure of restraint in a public forum.

We at NAMI NC believe in the very essence of transparency. We hope for a day when there is no longer a stigma attached to mental illnesses; when they are seen as the neurobiological no-fault disorders that they are, but that day has not yet arrived. People with mental illnesses suffer discrimination as well as their parents, their spouses, their children and often their extended families as well. Unfair judgments are made about character, upbringing and the stability of the entire family.

These are not members of society who seek public office or notoriety. Persons who die in state psychiatric institutions are most often not culpable and sometimes not competent. The manners of their deaths or injuries are often under the most horrific or neglectful of circumstances. To reveal their names without permission from the families is just another injustice done by a system which has already failed them. Please make a simple change to SB 799 and remove the provision to release the name; make it harder for the press to connect the dots by piecing together incident reports with no names, and death reports with names.

NAMI NC represents thousands of North Carolinians. Our members consist of family members of persons with mental illness, friends, professionals, and the persons with mental illness themselves. If you really want to help the cause, ask the families their permission before releasing names; please make a change in the bill you sponsored.

Sincerely,

Debra G. Dihoff
Executive Director

Cc: Governor Beverly Perdue
Lynn Bonner, NewsObserver
Jim Pitts, President NAMI NC