

May 19, 2021

NAMI

Attn: Elections 2021

4301 Wilson Blvd., Suite 300

Arlington, VA 22203

VIA EMAIL

[Voting@nami.org](mailto:Voting@nami.org)

To Whom It May Concern,

NAMI Colorado is pleased to put forth the nomination of **Rabbi Sandra Cohen** for election to the national NAMI board.

Rabbi Sandra Cohen lives and works in the community of mental health. Born into a family with mental illness, she was diagnosed with depression as a teen; she now lives with bipolar disorder, with an emphasis on treatment-resistant depression, and some anxiety as well. She knows, personally and professionally, how important battling stigma is, and how profoundly having community can shape our worlds.

Rabbi Cohen, who lives and works in Denver, CO, graduated summa cum laude from Macalester College, and received her Masters in Hebrew Letters and her *smicha* (ordination) from Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion, where she was a Wexner Graduate Fellow. She worked as a congregational rabbi in Denver for several years, most recently at Temple Micah, where, under her guidance, the synagogue membership increased by half. She ran services, adult education, the religious school and other programs, supervising volunteers and paid staff alike. She has served on the executive committee of the Rocky Mountain Rabbis and Cantors (RMRC), and chaired a non-profit dedicated to bringing together Israeli, Palestinian, and American girls, to learn from one another. More recently, Rabbi Cohen helped to found the mental health committee at her synagogue, and has created a variety of mental health programs for the entire Denver/Boulder metro area.

Following a stroke, Rabbi Cohen left the congregational rabbinate, and has been teaching and offering pastoral care since that time. More recently, Rabbi Cohen has worked locally and nationally in mental health outreach in the Jewish and other religious communities. She preaches, teaches, writes, and gives seminars on a variety of topics around mental illness, encouraging faith communities to be more welcoming for people with mental illnesses and their families. She believes that values common to all religions – caring for the sick, welcoming the stranger, do deeds of loving-kindness, to name a few – can support churches and temples, mosques and synagogues in taking concrete steps to do more, and better, mental health outreach.

Rabbi Cohen believes that her work in faith communities, helping institutions and individuals reach out to the mentally ill among them, in turn, she believes that she can help with NAMI Faithnet outreach with those faith groups. Working both in local communities, and in the interfaith world at large, she hopes to bring a message of acceptance and welcome for all who choose to be not just a part of NAMI, but also for everyone who seeks out a faith. She would like to train other clergy, as well as laypeople, on how to reach out to the mentally ill and our families – and to learn from those institutions about building a better, more accepting and nurturing world.

It gives me great honor to put forth her nomination, with the full support of NAMI Colorado's board, for service to NAMI's national board.

Sincerely,

*Ray Merenstein*

Ray Merenstein (May 19, 2021 11:25 MDT)

Ray Merenstein