



May 23, 2021

Chair of Elections
NAMI
3803 N. Fairfax Drive, Suite 100
Arlington, VA 22203

Dear Chair of Elections,

NAMI North Texas is proud to nominate Vanessa Fernandes, M.A., as a candidate for the 2021-2024 NAMI Board, as verified in NAMI North Texas Special Meeting Board Minutes from Sunday, May 23rd, 2021.

In both her personal life and her professional career, Vanessa champions the cause of mental health and works effectively to encourage open dialogue and meaningful change. A respected and recognized corporate leader, Vanessa actively advances mental health advocacy and promotes NAMI in corporate circles and among colleagues.

She has served on the NAMI national board for the past 3 years and led their Development Committee efforts. She is interested in serving 3 more years to ensure continuity on the work they put in flight over the last few years. Some of the efforts she was involved with include CEO selection, CEO on boarding, HRD hiring and development, DEI strategy, 5 year strategic plan development, field advancement efforts (like waving NAMIWalks fees), ED leadership development and supporting the field (grants to affiliates). She has also been a rock star partner to our NAMI North Texas affiliate, advocating for issues important to us at the national level, advocating for NAMI NTX and mental wellness amongst her corporate partners as well as welcoming our NAMI North Texas Executive Director into her corporate circles. Her efforts have helped us develop strong partnerships with North Texas-based companies such as AT&T and the Dallas Mavericks, among others.

Considering the leadership strengths specified in NAMI's 2021 Call for Candidates, the Board of NAMI North Texas is confident that, given her education, marketing/advertising/PR background, corporate experience and personal gifts, Vanessa brings important capacities in financial oversight and budgeting, plus legal understanding—particularly in community relations, human resource development and risk management. Additionally, she is well-versed in technology deployment for organizational needs—promoting effective web presence, digital marketing, and social media engagement. Vanessa knows the importance of communication strategies that inform and inspire across many age groups. Vanessa's strengths, personally and professionally, would contribute significantly to the NAMI board's vision and leadership.

Born and educated in India, migrating here with less than \$1,000 to her name, Vanessa has built a life in the U.S. over the last 2+ years. Vanessa has a vital understanding of minority cultures, the stigma attached to their perceptions of mental health issues and a keen appreciation of both the challenges and the urgency for outreaching and serving culturally-diverse populations. In addition, with her corporate background, Vanessa has strong commitment for advancing NAMI within corporations and in



identifying opportunities for the NAMI Development team to promote NAMI and mental health advocacy in corporate cause marketing.

After enduring losses in her family attributed to mental health issues, Vanessa is passionate about early personal education, active community messaging and well-tuned business/corporate awareness about mental health/mental illness. Vanessa recognizes the impact corporate leaders can make in supporting employees and their families, as well as partnering with others in promoting social and community change. These goals are ones that Vanessa has both the personal dedication and the corporate experience to champion.

We thank you for the opportunity to nominate Vanessa Fernandes as a 2021 Candidate to the NAMI Board of Directors.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Athena Trentin".

Athena Trentin, Ed.D.
Executive Director
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