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National Alliance on Mental Illness

An Open Message from the NAMI Board

The NAMI Board of Directors is all-inclusive and seeks highly qualified leaders of all backgrounds and experiences to serve on the national board to represent the interests of NAMI's broad coalition. NAMI has enjoyed continued growth in revenue as well as recognized leadership in public policy, advances with strategic partnerships and steady program successes. The NAMI Board of Directors has fiduciary, legal and generative decision-making responsibilities to sustain these successes and further strengthen the organization. Not only is the board accountable for driving and managing revenue growth, but also for steering the organization by adopting policies for ethical and legal governance. Ultimately, the national board is charged with ensuring NAMI's effectiveness in advancing its mission.

Another pivotal board responsibility is leadership succession planning which, for the NAMI Board, brings this yearly Call for Candidates to enhance a board's capacity, as terms end and yearly elections are held. People with knowledge, skills, expertise and life experiences who can contribute effective leadership for growth and impact are encouraged to come forward as board candidates for 2021.

Given the critical responsibilities as directors of a national nonprofit organization, serving on the NAMI Board requires understanding the complex legal, fiduciary and generative decisions the board is routinely required to address.

Prior experiences that lend themselves to successful service include the following:

- Prior for-profit or nonprofit board service for other organizations
- National-level leadership experience—professional or volunteer
- Corporate, administrative or managerial-level experience (public or private)
- Service on the board of an effectively run NAMI State Organization or NAMI Affiliate

This year, five candidates will be elected to serve three-year terms. Five current board members' regular terms will expire in July, and their seats will come up for general election. Two current board members are completing second terms and cannot seek re-election; three have served a single term and have the option to seek re-election.

Expertise and Experience Needed for the 2021-2022 Board

NAMI's core purpose is to create and manage a broad coalition of diverse individuals representing the lived experience of mental illness in order to drive changes in attitudes, policy, services and support for those impacted. NAMI's commitment to invite and include individuals with a wide array of experience honors the strengths of the NAMI movement.

The NAMI Board undertook a "Strengths Assessment" to identify current strengths and the areas of skill and experience most needed in 2021. The assessment revealed the following five areas important to enhance board governance by specifically naming the following attributes, skills and expertise as highly relevant for candidates seeking board service this year:

- **Diversity of age, race, ethnicity, language, experience and national geography:** In order to best serve the widely varying needs of the NAMI movement the board must constantly strive to reflect the diversity of those impacted by mental illness. The NAMI Board specifically seeks people of color as well as people living in states/regions currently under-represented. All other domains of diversity are also welcomed and encouraged. Please review the profiles of the board members continuing into 2021-2022 at www.nami.org/board and consider nominating a person you know who would bring diversity, experience and skills currently lacking or under-represented on the national board.
- **Knowledge of the philanthropic community and track record with donor cultivation:** NAMI relies on strong relationships with the philanthropic community in order to continue to grow the movement and deliver on the mission. Board members play an instrumental role as ambassadors and partners in identifying opportunities, engaging new supporters and cultivating valuable connections.
- **Experience with a variety of revenue models and financial oversight and management:** Given the increasing size and complexity of the organization's budget, the board must be laser-focused on long-term financial sustainability in service of bringing the NAMI mission to individuals, families and communities everywhere. Individuals with professional experience in financial management, accounting, banking, trusts and/or investments are needed to help enhance the expertise of the board in 2021.
- **Human capital management:** Individuals with professional experience in human resources and personnel development & management can offer valuable insight to leadership of this rapidly growing and developing organization.
- **Legal and risk management:** NAMI's alliance model includes interdependencies between the national office and state & local affiliates on a wide variety of topics. Board members with expertise in legal and risk management professions are needed to advise NAMI leadership on evolving issues related to programs, policies and infrastructure.
- **Criminal Justice:** Individuals with professional and/or lived experience in the criminal justice system (federal, state or local) are sought to provide insight as NAMI implements this important component of its strategic plan.

The NAMI Board is asking that each candidate respond in writing specifically about his/her knowledge, experience and expertise in these highly desired areas.

NAMI Board Service Commitment

NAMI Board service is an honor and a privilege. For those who earn the opportunity, NAMI Board service must be a top volunteer priority. NAMI Board members must commit to do the following:

- Understand and protect the fiduciary health of the organization
- Understand and adhere to the legal and fiduciary responsibilities of a nonprofit board
- Serve a three-year term, with the opportunity to serve a second term if reelected
- Attend quarterly meetings of two or more days in duration, as well the meetings that occur during the NAMI National Convention. (Note that due to COVID-19, meetings are currently being conducted virtually via videoconference; however, at some point meetings will occur at NAMI headquarters in Arlington, VA.)
 - Attend the NAMI National Convention where board members serve as event ambassadors to the membership and others who attend

- Dedicate time weekly to NAMI Board service, which may include the following:
 - Service on two or three standing committees
 - Conference calls
 - Service on other work groups as needed
 - Travel for board and other meetings
- Make what the individual believes to be a significant financial contribution to NAMI, on an annual basis.

The NAMI bylaws require that a minimum of 75% of the board comprise persons who have or have had mental illness, or parents or their relatives, including civil and domestic partners. To ensure compliance with this requirement, all candidates are asked to identify if they have had a lived experience of mental illness, or are a family member. Because all currently seated board members for the 2020-21 term do self-identify under this definition, nominations of those who do not have lived experience as an individual or as a family member are welcomed to this 2021 election cycle.

Specifics for NAMI Elections 2021

In 2018, the NAMI Board changed the annual election process to ensure sound and fair election practices and to encourage individuals who are highly qualified to come forward for board service.

- **Verification of Degrees and Certifications:** All degrees and professional certifications that a candidate wishes to include in his/her profile for presentation to the voting membership will be subject to verification. Any information that cannot be externally validated will not be included in the candidate's profile.
- **NAMI Membership:** Candidates are required to be members of NAMI at the time their nomination is submitted. If you have any questions about your membership status, please email memberservices@nami.org. To become a member through the national website, go to www.nami.org/membership.
- **Criminal Background Checks:** Candidates will be submitted to a criminal background check. However, data forthcoming from a criminal background check will not disqualify an individual from board service. Results of the background check **will remain confidential** and will not be included in the candidate's profile. For more details, please refer to "Election Information 2021" at www.nami.org/2021Elections.
- **Nominator and Candidate Paper Submissions:** Paperwork required for nominators and for candidates requires nominators and candidates to disclose potential conflicts of interest and to verify (as nominators) or to agree to uphold (as candidates) the ethics and confidentiality policies. These declarations historically have been part of board expectations and continue to be longstanding agreements that all board members sign as they are seated on the board.
- **Candidates' Declarations and Board Needs in 2021:** All credentialed voters (as designated by state and affiliate leadership) will receive the 2021 Voting Packets which will include each candidate's declarations regarding his/her experience or expertise. From the candidates' materials, credentialed voters will learn the strengths and expertise of each candidate. Credentialed voters are asked to carefully consider each candidate's qualifications and to thoughtfully select the five candidates who, in the assessment of the voter, have the greatest potential to contribute the skills and expertise that most effectively complement the existing strengths and expertise of board members whose terms continue into the 2021-2022 board year.

When Considering a Nomination

If you have questions about the election process, contact voting@nami.org or visit www.nami.org/voting.

Service on the NAMI Board is a fulfilling experience. We are honored and humbled to represent the members who elected us, and we are dedicated to doing the best job possible for NAMI and its vital mission. We invite able and experienced leaders from all walks of life to join us in this remarkable journey—and we thank the thousands of NAMI members who inspire and focus us in our work.

We encourage those who are considering seeking election to contact us. Thank you for all that you do, every day, to support NAMI!