



4/12/25

NAMI

Attn: Elections 2025

4301 Wilson Blvd., Suite 300

Arlington, VA 22203

Dear NAMI, 2025 Elections Committee,

NAMI Hall leadership is proud to submit the name of Benjamin McAfee as a candidate for the 2025-2026 NAMI Board of Directors. NAMI Hall voted to endorse Benjamin McAfee as a candidate to the NAMI Board on 4/12/25. Benjamin McAfee is an active member of NAMI Hall.

Benjamin McAfee is an exceptional candidate for the 2025-2026 NAMI Board of Directors. Benjamin has experience working with NAMIs in both Georgia and Florida.

Benjamin has demonstrated remarkable dedication as an active member of NAMI since 2017, when he joined NAMI Georgia as a policy analyst intern; his first leadership training was *NAMI Connections* through NAMI Moultrie. He has excelled in roles as a presenter through *In Our Own Voice* and *Ending the Silence*. Benjamin has given over 50 presentations at various schools throughout Florida and Georgia and has consistently utilized his personal experience with mental health and living with bipolar disorder to inspire and influence people's perspectives. He has spoken to middle and high school students, university audiences, police officers, and faith leaders, among others.

This year, the national NAMI Board is looking for faith members. Benjamin grew up in the church as a missionary in the Dominican Republic. He identifies as a progressive Christian, and God has been central to his mental health recovery. Additionally, Ben has access to marginalized communities that are typically excluded from mainstream Christianity, such as LGBTQ+ Christians. He has experience speaking to churches about mental illness in both Spanish and English, and he is uniquely qualified to talk about the culture of spirituality and mental illness.

In addition to faith members, NAMI National is looking for people with experience in peer support delivery. Benjamin was trained as a peer specialist through the *Georgia Mental Health Consumer Network*, where he was given a scholarship. Benjamin worked as a peer specialist serving multiple populations that included youth, people in the criminal justice system, and those living with substance abuse. He became a certified *Wellness Recovery Action Program* trainer and delivered peer support services at Banyan Health Systems in Florida, utilizing the WRAP and Wellness Coaching framework he was trained in. His experience in peer support delivery in different communities that also included Hispanics and Haitians could enrich the board's request.

In other leadership positions, Benjamin was part of the *NAMI Broward Advocacy Group (NAGS)* in Florida and served as *NAMI Broward board member*, a position he held for **4 years**. He also worked with the *NAMI Alliance Youth Advisory Board* in NAMI Florida, the state office, and was appointed by a commissioner on a Mental Health Advisory Board, in which he served as Vice-Chair to help the city allocate money for NARCAN in his community. He has also met with legislators in both Florida and Georgia to advance mental health parity, became a trainer in *NAMI Smarts*, and gave that training to NAMI Georgia.

As an advocate, Benjamin's unwavering commitment to eradicating the stigma surrounding mental health motivates him to explore new ways to engage communities where mental health remains a taboo subject. Notably, Benjamin demonstrated a keen interest in initiating conversations about mental health within the Latin@ community. His proactive efforts, including regular updates, the willingness to assist in planning and engaging in grassroots promotion for this initiative, played a pivotal role in NAMI orchestrating the inaugural community conversation, *Sharing Hope/Compartiendo Esperanza*, tailored to the Latin@ community in Florida.

Benjamin is a self-starter and collaborative team player whose extensive experience would significantly benefit the NAMI National Board. He has never forgotten his roots and has navigated working with both Georgia and Florida NAMIs in different capacities. I am confident that he will effectively deliver impactful contributions to any role he undertakes. We believe that Benjamin brings a unique and invaluable perspective that leaves a lasting impact on the next generation.

For these reasons, the NAMI Hall Board supports the nomination of Benjamin McAfee to serve families and individuals affected by mental illness as a member of the 2025-2026 NAMI Board of Directors.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Lauren Joiner ~~Paul~~ Arakaki, and Joyce Allen

Lauren Joiner Paul, Corey Arakaki, and Joyce Allen