Dear Jane,

Happy International Women's Day and Women's History Month! In recognition of these important events, NAMI TX wants to highlight the legislative advocacy work we are doing for Texas women.

A primary focus for us this legislative session is the issue of maternal mental health. Although addressing the unique mental health needs of women both during and after pregnancy is key to the well-being of both the mother and child, Texas has significant work to do to care for pregnant mothers of Texas. Texas has the ninth highest rate of maternal mortality during pregnancy or within a year postpartum in the nation, and many of these deaths could be prevented with adequate mental health and substance use services. A recent report by Texans Care for Children, in fact, shows that untreated maternal mental health conditions cost the state of Texas over 2 billion dollars per year from conception to five years postpartum.

Despite this reality, Texas has the worst rate in the nation in regard to uninsured rates for women of childbearing age (18 to 44) at 25.5 percent. Medicaid and other insurance options can cover important behavioral health services for woman including psychiatric diagnostic evaluation, mental health targeted case management, and peer specialist services.

NAMI TX has chosen to focus on two key bills this session to address these gaps in Texas. SB 147, one focus bill this session, would establish maternal mental health peer support pilot programs in areas with high rates of maternal mortality. We are also collaborating with multiple coalition partners to support a group of bills (HB 107/SB 141, HB 133, HB 98, HB 146, HB 414) that would extend postpartum Medicaid coverage for women from 6 months to 12 months, ensuring that mothers will have access to mental health services during this critical time.

*** Note: the text above is authored by Ana O'Quin, NAMI Texas Policy Intern. See below to learn a little more about Ana. She loves being able to connect the real experiences of individuals and communities to macro-level change via policy advocacy work. We are ever so grateful for her work to improve the lives of individuals affected by mental illness.
MEET
Ana O’Quin

NAMI Texas
POLICY INTERN

Q&A

Hometown?

ANA O’QUIN

Malang, Indonesia

What do you do at NAMI & what’s your favorite part of it?

ANA O’QUIN

I am a policy intern at NAMI for my final field internship for my graduate program in social work at UT; I focus specifically on youth and early intervention policies. My favorite part of my role so far has been connecting to other advocates and coalitions – it has been encouraging to see the ways collaboration in the policy sphere can truly make change and move things forward!
What’s your favorite wellness habit?

**ANA O’QUIN**

Recently my go-to activities after a stressful day have been a wind-down yoga flow and playing piano.

What mental health issues are you most passionate about?

**ANA O’QUIN**

Maternal mental health, access to therapy for youth, and seeing racism as a mental health crisis.

Favorite mental health book?

**ANA O’QUIN**

I just started *The Body Keeps the Score: Brain, Mind, Body in the Healing of Trauma* by Dr. Bessel van der Kolk and it looks like it is gearing up to be one of my favorite mental health related books!

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**WOMEN PIONEERS IN MENTAL HEALTH**

In honor of Women’s History Month
JUDITH BASS.
Judith Bass is the Director of the Global Mental Health Program at Johns Hopkins University where she works to expand availability of effective mental health treatment across the globe.

CYNTHIA M. BULIK.
Cindy is a leading researcher who is advancing the world’s understanding of the interplay between biology and environment and risk for eating disorders.
After watching the My Story video above: learn more about Anne Grady, her writing, and other projects [here](#)! We thank [NAMI Central Texas](#) and [Takeda](#) for partnering with us on this My Story video.

Also, on Thursday at 2 pm, NAMI Texas will be hosting [a virtual legislative briefing on non-medical switching](#), and Anne will be speaking there - please join!
The month of March marks one-year of the COVID-19 pandemic having a deep impact on our lives. We have all been challenged by the collective experience. To mark the occasion, we’d like to remind people of a few good resources that exist to support us during these trying times:

- NAMI COVID-19 Information and Resources
- NAMI Texas COVID-19 Information Page
- Texas COVID-19 Mental Health Support Line
- Hogg Foundation Resources for Mental Health and COVID-19

Another NAMI Texas Day of Action has come and gone to great success. Almost 60 advocates came together to speak with 13 local policymakers or their staff about their mental health priorities for the 87th Legislative Session. Of course this means we have to do it again.

Registration for NAMI Texas' Day of Action #3 is NOW OPEN! This virtual event will take place on Friday, March 26th, between 10a-3pm. Legislative outreach visits will last approximately 30 minutes and registrants are able to select a time preference.

During the event, participants will have the opportunity to meet with legislators or their staff to share their stories about mental illness and recovery, concerns about that state of mental health care in Texas, and potential policy solutions. We believe that this kind of legislative outreach is critical in mental health policy advocacy.

If you would like to participate in NAMI Texas Day of Action #3, please REGISTER before 11:59 pm on Sunday, March 14th. Legislative meetings may not be scheduled for registrations received after this date. Of course, NAMI Texas Days of Action are free to attend.

To ensure that participants are prepared to meet with their legislators, NAMI Texas will host a virtual policy advocacy briefing prior to Day of Action #3, on Monday, March 22nd, at 7pm. Watch your email inbox for virtual meeting information the week of March 15th.

Affiliate Spotlight
Tomorrow, March 9th, at 11:30 am CT, NAMI San Antonio is hosting a general meeting (via Zoom) about mental health advocacy. Our Executive Director and Peer Policy Fellow are the presenters for the meeting. All are welcome to join! Please RSVP here!

Programming Update
NAMI Texas and our Affiliates offer a broad array of online mental health support groups and education classes. Please visit here to join these programs.

Also, we're pleased to announce our new LGBTQ+ Connection Recovery Support Group. This is a 90-minute recovery support group program designed for LGBTQ+ individuals living with mental health conditions. We will provide a sense of belonging and a safe space to discuss lived experiences while receiving the support of LGBTQ+ facilitators. Click here for more information!