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**For Immediate Release:**

**Mental Health Advocates Unite at the Capitol to Urge Policymakers to Talk About Mental Illness**

**Tallahassee, FL (January 23, 2018)** – The National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) Florida and five partner organizations are kicking off Behavioral Health Day on Wednesday, January 24, 2018 at the Florida Capitol to empower peers and family members to advocate for better behavioral health funding and policies in Florida. Behavioral Health Day will conclude with a press conference at noon to encourage lawmakers to set aside the stigma on mental illness, start talking openly about mental health, and pass a package of bills that will help moms, first responders, students, families, and peers.

Advocates will also work with policymakers on solutions to the prevalence of mental illness with opioid addiction and substance use disorders. During Behavioral Health Day, attendees will see first-hand how state government works, learn how to communicate with lawmakers, and meet with policymakers who influence behavioral health laws and funding.

“Behavioral Health Day at the Capitol allows, peers, caregivers, friends and family to unite to talk about mental health issues and work with lawmakers to find solutions,” said Alisa LaPolt, Executive Director of NAMI Florida. “With the current dialogue in the state around the opioid epidemic, it is important that we also address the prevalence of mental illness with opioid addiction and substance use disorder. These issues go hand-in-hand in the majority of cases; we can't treat one without the other.”

**What:** Over 150 mental health advocates and legislator champions will unite at the Behavior Health Day press conference to urge policymakers to pass a full package of bills and spending priorities to support behavioral health in Florida. Issues range from funding for addressing the opioid crisis to mental health parity to patient access to mediations to services for veterans and their families.

**When:** Wednesday, January 24 at 12 pm

**Where:** The Florida Capitol, 4th Floor Rotunda, 400 S. Monroe St. Tallahassee, FL 32399

**Who:** Over 150 mental health advocates, and NAMI Florida partner behavioral health organizations will unite to raise awareness about mental illness throughout the state.

- Senator Wilton Simpson

- Representative Heather Fitzenhagen
- Dr. Rajiv Tandon, executive vice-chair and professor at the University of Florida Department of Psychiatry and NAMI Florida board member
- Katherine Osborne, 22-year-old senior at UCF studying to be a psychologist to help others through the pain she experienced
- NAMI Florida
- Florida Association of Managing Entities
- Florida Behavioral Health Association
- Florida Council for Community Mental Health
- Florida Psychiatric Society
- Peer Support Coalition of Florida
- Florida Police Association
- Police Benevolent Association

To register for Behavioral Health Day at the Capitol and learn more about NAMI Florida's efforts to raise awareness for mental illness visit [www.namiflorida.org](http://www.namiflorida.org).

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**About NAMI Florida:** NAMI Florida is the state affiliate of the National Alliance on Mental Illness with headquarters in Tallahassee, Florida. With twenty-seven affiliates in communities across Florida, NAMI provides education, advocacy, and support groups for people with mental illnesses and their loved ones. NAMI Florida works with state and federal agencies and elected officials to promote recovery and improved treatment for individuals who have a mental illness and their families. NAMI Florida also works collaboratively with other statewide organizations to achieve a better mental health system for all Florida's citizens. To learn more about NAMI Florida, visit [www.namiflorida.org](http://www.namiflorida.org).