

# U.S. Rep. Steil: Joins Racine County mental health advocates, highlights importance of Mental Illness Awareness Week

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**JANESVILLE, WISCONSIN**—Today, Bryan Steil was the featured speaker during a live virtual panel with the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) Racine County. During the Zoom meeting with NAMI Racine County, Steil discussed his bill, the Mental Health and Substance Abuse Support During COVID-19 Act, and work in Congress to provide mental health resources to Southeast Wisconsin.

“No one should battle mental health challenges alone. As we continue dealing with the coronavirus pandemic, workers, students, and seniors are coping with the stress and burdens this crisis has dealt us. I am working to ensure everyone has access to mental health resources, especially during these difficult times. NAMI Racine County is a great example of local leaders working to end the stigma surrounding mental illness and provide help to those who need it. Through my two Children’s Mental Health Forums, I’ve worked directly with local and state experts, parents, and doctors to highlight best practices and ways the federal government can support our communities. I will continue working with my colleagues to address our needs in Southeast Wisconsin,” **said Steil.**

“Working with our local and state legislators is crucial. We need people like Congressman Bryan Steil and Representative Robert Wittke out there promoting mental illness awareness. We need legislation to help and protect individuals that

many times cannot advocate for themselves. We need to make sure there are resources out there for treatment and therapy and that they are easy to access. We need Peer Support Specialists available to those in need of help to understand what they are experiencing and the best way to do that is to work together and break the party lines because this is something that affects 1 in 4 people,” **said Nicole Smart, Program Director of NAMI Racine County.**

Steil’s bill, H.R. 7893, the Mental Health and Substance Abuse Support During COVID-19 Act, establishes a \$1 billion “COVID-19 Mental Health and Substance Abuse Response Grant Program” within the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration within the U.S. Health and Human Services Department. This program awards grants to states, on the basis of population, to help them address the rise in mental health and substance abuse public expenditures coinciding with the COVID-19 pandemic.

States can use this grant money in a variety of ways including: 24/7 crisis call centers; support programs for frontline coronavirus health care workers; mental health and substance abuse training for relevant health care workforce and community members; and partnership programs with police departments, community organizations, and schools to coordinate and expand resources available to at-risk individuals and their families.

Steil held a Children’s Mental Health Forum at Case High School in Racine in 2019. Parents attended to receive information on resources available to students in their schools and across Racine County. This summer, Steil held a virtual Children’s Mental Health Forum with local and state experts, and doctors, to discuss the coronavirus’ impact on students and effects this pandemic has on children’s mental health.

NAMI Racine has been serving the mental health community in Racine County for 40 years. NAMI Racine County provides advocacy, education, support, and public awareness so that all individuals and families affected by mental illness can build better lives.