

**NAMI Mercer 2022 Visionary Partner Awardee**  
**The Honorable Verlina Reynolds-Jackson**



At “Night Out with NAMI” on November 6 at the Boathouse at Mercer Lake, NAMI Mercer paid tribute to the Honorable Verlina Reynolds Jackson. She received the organization’s 2022 Visionary Partner Award for leveraging her position of leadership in the NJ State Assembly to set an example for increasing awareness, promoting understanding, and improving the lives of people affected by mental illness.

Verlina assumed her legislative position well-qualified to serve. She holds a BA in Sociology from the College of NJ, an MS in Administration from Central Michigan University, and Certification as a Municipal Finance Officer from Rutgers. Prior to serving in the Assembly, she was a member of the Trenton City Council from 2010 to 2018.

For the past four years, Verlina has represented the 15th Legislative District. Like our NAMI affiliate, most of Verlina’s 225,000 constituents live in Mercer County, an ethnically and economically diverse community. No matter our differences, we are all vulnerable to mental illness. Verlina understands this challenge has used her political power to increase awareness, reduce stigma, and increase mental health services.

She has sponsored multiple mental health-related bills, including:

- creating a Crisis Response Support Program to make mental health services available to police responding to mental health emergencies.
- requiring public school instruction in suicide prevention in grades kindergarten through 12.
- requiring each school district to report on the number of mental health professionals and school safety specialists it employs.
- changing the term “postpartum depression” to “perinatal mood disorders.”

Grateful as we are for Verlina’s legislative advocacy, NAMI Mercer recognizes her strong personal commitment to the mission of our organization. A Walk participant since 2018, Verlina formed her own team this year, “The Blue Stars,” attended the kickoff in March, and braved the scorching heat on May 21 to deliver an inspiring speech at the Walk in Robbinsville. Verlina’s passion and dedication to our cause came through loud and clear. She is a beautiful person both inside and out. We were happy to bestow her with this honor.