



ASSEMBLYWOMAN AILEEN GUNTHER 100TH ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

ALBANY OFFICE:

Room 826, LOB, Albany, NY 12248 - (518) 455-5355

DISTRICT OFFICES:

18 Anawana Lake Road, Monticello, NY 12701 - (845) 794-5807

16 James Street, 3rd Floor, Middletown, NY 10940 - (845) 342-9304

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*****Press Release*****

Assemblywoman Gunther Introduces COVID-19 Mental Health Legislation

Assemblywoman Aileen Gunther (D-I-WF Forestburgh) has introduced legislation (A10629) creating a statewide advisory council within the Office of Mental Health to issue recommendations surrounding mental health care for essential workers during the COVID-19 pandemic.

“Our essential workers have been putting their lives on the line to take care of us during this pandemic. We’re going to be seeing higher rates of PTSD, anxiety, and depression, and we need to make sure they have the proper supports and services available to them,” Gunther said.

Assemblywoman Gunther worked on the bill with the Mental Health Association in New York State (MHANYS). Glenn Liebman, CEO of MHANYS, said, “We are in an environment that is unprecedented in the traumatic impact to our workforce. Our brave frontline workers have been under siege from COVID-19.”

As the state gradually reopens, Gunther and Liebman say that there needs to be a concerted effort to ensure that essential workers don’t get left behind. A survey of physicians and nurses in China at the height of the pandemic showed that approximately 50 percent of respondents reported symptoms of depression, 44 percent reported symptoms of anxiety, and 34 percent reported insomnia.

“This advisory council is constructed so that the people who are on the ground in the trenches would have the most representation,” Gunther said. “Their input in this recovery is so important.”

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