



Mental Health Association in New York State, Inc.

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Memorandum in Support

S.7612 (Carlucci)/A.9806 (Fernandez)

AN ACT to amend the education law, in relation to requiring certain persons receive mental health training each year

The Mental Health Association in New York State (MHANYS), representing 26 Mental Health Association affiliates serving the mental health needs of New Yorkers in 52 counties strongly supports S.7612/A.9806. This legislation would require all teachers, teacher assistants and schools administrators to receive a minimum of three hours of mental health training each year.

In what can be described as nothing less than a youth mental health crisis, New York schools struggle to perform their educational mission as the incidence of student mental health disorders steadily rises. One in five youth ages 13 to 17 have, at some point in their lives, experienced diagnosable mental health disorders and as many as 47 percent experienced some level of mental health challenge. Often, these disorders go unnoticed and/or untreated, which negatively impacts students' academic performance, graduation rates, and prospects for employment, college or trade school. Some impacted youth get in legal trouble while others, including some 157,000 youth between 10 and 24 years of age, receive medical care for self-inflicted injuries at emergency departments across the U.S. Most worrisome is that 1 in 12 high school students have attempted suicide.

In response to this public health crisis New York recognized the wisdom in efforts to raise mental health literacy among students, and in response became the first state in the nation to require schools to teach about mental health. However, there is no similar requirement that key school personnel also receive instruction about mental health. This leaves school staff with few resources to cope with the everyday challenge of educating students with mental health disorders. In addition, many of these personnel are now tasked with providing students with mental health instruction and lack the knowledge and confidence necessary to provide this instruction.

It's critically important that schools and students share a common knowledge and language about mental health. The training required by this legislation will assure that school personnel and students alike possess essential knowledge about mental health so that schools can adopt a culture and climate of mental health and wellness to the benefit of everyone.

MHANYS therefore urges the legislature to pass S.7612/A.9806 and for the Governor to sign this critical legislation into law.

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