



# Mental Health Association in New York State, Inc.

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## Memorandum in Support

A.3040 (MacDonald)

*AN ACT* to amend the education law, in relation to the definition of the practice of pharmacy

The Mental Health Association in New York State, Inc. (MHANYS) supports A.3040 (MacDonald), which would amend the definition of the practice of pharmacy in the Education Law. This amendment would effectively authorize pharmacies to administer Long Acting Injectable (LAI) medication for various mental health and substance use disorders including antipsychotic medication to patients in need.

Since being introduced in clinical practice in the late 1960s, LAI antipsychotics have been widely used as maintenance therapy for patients with schizophrenia. The administration of medication in this manner has provided more reliable drug delivery and reduced differences in peak and trough plasma levels of the drug. Studies that have compared short-acting oral antipsychotics with long-acting injectable antipsychotics support injectable antipsychotics as having real benefit over oral antipsychotics on patient outcomes particularly due to improved adherence. This is critically important because half of patients diagnosed with schizophrenia, for example, do not take their medications as prescribed. As a result, re-admission rates for non-adherent patients are five times higher than those who are adherent. Further, a provision in the bill that requires the pharmacy to document and electronically report the administration of an LAI to the patient's licensed prescriber helps reduce gaps in treatment adherence that often occur when patients self-administer daily oral medication.

Many New Yorkers living with serious mental illness rely on mental health clinics and hospitals to receive their LAIs. Unfortunately, due to the COVID-19 Pandemic numerous clinics and hospitals have closed or stopped administering injections. It is imperative that people with serious mental illness continue to receive their medication—which is particularly challenging due to these closures. However, this legislation provides a remedy for this precarious LAI access problem. Pharmacies are well-equipped and well-positioned to fill this void. Their proximity in the community to patient homes and relatively extensive hours of operation make pharmacies even more convenient and accessible than traditional clinic settings. Additionally, pharmacies are able to maintain a large medication inventory, something medical offices are not well-suited for. It is also less stigmatizing for a patient to receive their monthly LAI in a pharmacy setting versus in a specialty mental health clinic.

Failure to pass this legislation would miss an opportunity to address a severe medication access problem for people with serious mental illness. This legislation would help to prevent avoidable

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negative outcomes including increased utilization of emergency room services, greater reliance on law enforcement involvement and unnecessary entry into the criminal justice system.

Unfortunately, the lack of access to the appropriate medication compounded with the added anxiety in our current times makes the use of ERs and law enforcement even more likely for a person with a serious mental illness who can't access their medication – putting the individual at greater risk of contracting COVID-19.

Currently, pharmacists in 33 states have authority to administer LAI antipsychotics and an additional 12 states allow pharmacy administered LAI antipsychotic medication with a collaborative practice agreement in place. New York should join these states and extend access to its residents in need of convenient and reliable access to long acting psychiatric medications.

For all of the aforementioned reasons MHANYS urges the Legislature to pass A.3040.