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Memorandum in Support

S.1537 (Hoylman-Sigal)/A.4788 (O'Donnell)

AN ACT to amend the education law, in relation to enacting the student suicide prevention act

MHANYS supports S.1537 (Hoylman-Sigal)/A.4788 (O'Donnell), which would require all New York school boards to adopt a policy on student suicide prevention, intervention, and post-vention for grades 7 to 12.

Schools can play a critical role in suicide prevention and intervention efforts for youth in crisis. Unfortunately, according to The Trevor Project, over 1/3 of New York school districts do not currently have a suicide prevention policy and there is currently no legal requirement for them to have such policies. When youths are in crisis, it is essential that the adults around them be equipped to recognize issues and respond appropriately. It is equally important that those in crisis be able to access resources that provide care, support and safety.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), reports that among high school students in New York in 2017, 17.4% seriously considered suicide and 10.1% made non-fatal suicide attempts. Each year, 4,600 children and teens, age 10-19, die by suicide making it the second leading cause of death for that age group.

School suicide prevention policies are intended to protect the health and well-being of all students by having procedures in place to prevent, assess the risk of, intervene in, and respond to suicide. Ideally, school suicide prevention, intervention and post-vention policies cover actions that take place in the school, on school property, at school-sponsored functions and activities, on school buses or vehicles and at bus stops, and at school-sponsored out-of-school events where school staff are present. Policies can apply to the entire school community, including educators, school and district staff, students, parents/guardians, and volunteers. Policies can also cover appropriate school responses to suicidal or high-risk behaviors that take place outside of the school environment. S.1537/A.4788 would help assure that such policies are enacted for all New York school districts.

For these reasons MHANYS urges the Legislature to pass S.1537/A.4788.

Healthy Minds For A Healthy New York

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