



New York State Society for Clinical Social Work, Inc.

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MEMORANDUM IN OPPOSITION

May 2017

Senate 3981 (Savino) / Assembly 1890 (Harris)

AN ACT to amend the social services law, in relation to making care and service is provided by licensed mental health practitioners eligible for coverage under the Medicaid program.

The New York State Society for Clinical Social Work strongly opposes this legislation which seeks to include mental health practitioners as Medicaid providers. This group, which includes creative arts therapists, psychoanalysts, marriage and family therapists and mental health counselors, is not qualified either by education or experience to diagnosis or treat the mental health needs of this diverse and often highly vulnerable group of New York State residents.

Medicaid in New York State, as of June 2016, has more than six million enrollees with another 100,000 residents now eligible to enroll. This population, which qualifies for health care by income, is often additionally dealing with insufficient housing, relationship problems, and difficulty accessing and utilizing available services effectively. Medicaid includes the elderly, the blind and disabled as well as non-elderly adults, low-income parents and 1,783,000 children (37% of the Medicaid population).

They are often have dual diagnoses combining mental illness with addictions and chronic health problems in the context of often serious daily living complications.

We oppose this legislation because:

- Mental Health Practitioners are not permitted by law to make a diagnosis of mental illness.
- In addition, physician evaluation is required by law for sustained treatment of a serious mental illness, which entails additional cost for a population highly comprised by mental and situational problems
- None of their master's level education require courses in cultural factors or the special populations which make up the greater part of Medicaid recipients.
- The requirement for direct face-to-face clinical practice experience is seriously limited and considerably less than that for Licensed Clinical Social Workers who are the legally-recognized autonomous master level mental health clinicians in New York State.

The New York State Society for Clinical Social Work, founded in 1968, represents the views of clinical social workers in the public and private sector throughout New

York State. We provide the majority of mental health services (about 60 percent) in the United States and practice in virtually every setting in the health care delivery system, including: medical and psychiatric hospitals, mental health clinics, AIDs treatment facilities, managed care organizations, trauma centers, research settings, schools and the criminal justice system.

In New York State there are 30,000+ LCSWs providing the greatest number mental health services including assessment and evaluation, diagnosis, and treatment of the full spectrum of mental and emotional disorders, ranging from anxiety and phobias to schizophrenia and manic-depression, as well as family conflicts and work-related problems. Our social work education includes courses related to culture, vulnerable populations, special populations, and the impact of environmental factors on functioning. This expertize enables both LMSWs and LCSWs to prepare our traditional specialized assessments of these recipients of social services.

For the above stated reasons, the NYS Society of Clinical Social Work, Inc. **strongly opposes** the passage of *Senate 3981 (Savino) / Assembly 1890 (Harris)*

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