



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Samra G. Brouk

## Senator Brouk, Assemblymember Gunther Introduce Bill to Require Mental Health Resources in the Workplace

SAMRA G. BROUK December 9, 2021

| ISSUE: **MENTAL HEALTH, ACCESS TO MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES, MENTAL HEALTH CARE, NEW YORK WORKFORCE, SUICIDE PREVENTION**

**ALBANY, NY** - Senator Samra Brouk (SD-55) and Assemblymember Aileen Gunther (AD-100) have introduced legislation that would require employers to conspicuously post information and resources pertaining to mental health. The mental health needs of New York State's workforce have been historically neglected, with the pandemic causing increased levels of burnout and work-related stress. The postings that would be implemented by this bill would be similar in nature to OSHA signage currently visible in most workplaces' staff areas.

Although not always as visible as other illnesses, untreated mental health conditions can contribute to disability, unemployment, underemployment, and compromised job performance. This can be especially true when employees are unaware of the resources available to them. Failing to provide employees with the resources they need can be costly; The National Institute of Mental Health estimates that employee mental health and substance-use disorders cost U.S. employers between \$80 billion and \$100 billion per year.

While workplaces across New York make policies and best practices regarding physical health issues and accommodations clear, similar practices do not exist for mental health. Many employers are unsure of the best practices regarding employee mental health and wellness. Creating a workplace culture of acceptance of mental health, standardized best practices across departments and different roles is essential to ensure that employees have the support they need to be successful.

**Senator Samra Brouk said**, "Over the past two years, our workforce has faced unprecedented challenges, which have undoubtedly affected the mental health of the average worker. As

Chair of the Senate Committee on Mental Health, I know that mental health is just as important as our physical health, both of which affect our ability to do our job. One of my priorities is to ensure that our workforce has the tools they need to be successful and healthy, both as we continue to combat the pandemic and beyond, and that's why the postings proposed by this bill to connect workers with available resources are so important."

**Assemblymember Aileen Gunther said,** "The COVID-19 pandemic has opened the eyes of a lot of people when it comes to dealing with mental health issues. We've seen people losing their jobs, isolation, and stores going out of business. All this can take its toll. More and more people have been reaching out for help and do not know where to look. This bill will help spread the word about what kind of services are available to New Yorkers. I'll also be working with the advocates and my partners in the Legislature to ensure that necessary mental health funding is available in next year's budget.

**Glenn Liebman, CEO of Mental Health Association in New York State said,** "The mental health impact of COVID has had an enormous impact on New York's workforce. This commonsense legislation will help ensure that employers and employees have a greater awareness of mental health and resources that will be available to them. We thank Senator Brouk and Assemblymember Gunther for their leadership in introducing this legislation."

In addition to requiring postings of mental health resources, the legislation also requires the state to establish a framework for addressing mental health in the workplace. This includes practices to reduce mental health stigma, increase public, employee, and employer awareness of mental health issues, and provide guidance to employers to put in place strategies and programs to support the mental health and wellness of their employees. This legislation is currently in committee in both the Senate and Assembly.

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#### RELATED LEGISLATION

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### 2021-S7577

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- Introduced

- ◦ In Committee Assembly
  - In Committee Senate
- ◦ On Floor Calendar Assembly
  - On Floor Calendar Senate
- ◦ Passed Assembly
  - Passed Senate
- Delivered to Governor
- Signed By Governor
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Relates to certain notices and guidelines regarding mental health services and resources available to employees

December 08, 2021

In Assembly Committee

Sponsored by **Samra G. Brouk**

Do you support this bill?