



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Samra G. Brouk

Senator Brouk Hosts Youth Mental Health Advisory Board Closing Ceremony

SAMRA G. BROUK July 31, 2024



ROCHESTER, NY [JULY 31, 2024]— State Senator Samra Brouk (SD-55), Chair of the New York State Senate Mental Health Committee, hosted the Youth Mental Health Advisory Board Closing Ceremony at the Thomas P. Ryan Recreation Center. This celebration marks the culmination of Senator Brouk's first cohort of the Youth Mental Health Advisory Board. The event featured guest speakers Haley Amering, Coordinator of Youth Initiatives from National Alliance on Mental Health (NAMI) - New York State and Chris Smith, PhD, Associate Commissioner, Adult Community Care Group, New York State Office of Mental

Health.

The declining mental health of youths is one of the most defining public health crises of our time, but young people are interested in being part of the solution. As such, Senator Brouk launched the inaugural Youth Mental Health Advisory Board with twenty-seven local high school students. The students met with the Senator and her staff during meetings from December to May. These meetings introduced students to the Advisory Board process, demystified the legislative process, and included break out sessions and open conversations to discuss mental health topics relevant to student needs.

The Advisory Board members centered youth voices by raising concerns in roundtable discussions, researching selected issues, and working with the Senator to propose legislative solutions to mental health crises. Students cited the value of peer support they received at these meetings and the ability to speak in a safe space. Nearly all students noted that they would recommend a friend apply to the next cohort of this program.

As July is National Minority Mental Health Awareness month, it is a good reminder that all youth need full access to mental health resources, treatment, and care. Senator Brouk's legislation, [S8359](#), would establish a *statewide* Youth Mental Health Advisory Board for youths aged 16-20 to advise the legislature and other government actors on topics pertaining to the mental health needs of youth.

Senator Samra G. Brouk (SD-55), Chair of the Senate Committee on Mental Health: “The research and feedback I got from Rochester’s Youth Mental Health Advisory Board members greatly impacted my mental health legislative work in Albany this past session. As the Chair of the Mental Health Committee, I am committed to finding new ways for youth to actively participate in creating the solutions that will address their real world problems. By giving them a seat at the table, we allow young people to stake a claim in their wellbeing. Youth-led

initiatives like the Advisory Board, my Student Lifeline Act, and peer support groups are essential— they will help us meet unneeds that have been long neglected in the mental health conversation.

Hailey Amering, Coordinator, Youth Initiatives, NAMI-NYS: "Meaningful youth involvement is something that has long been needed in our state. It's easy to place a young person wherever there is a given need, but when we can learn about their interests and truly listen to them, the impacts are far greater. Investing in youth mental health has to start now. They aren't our future leaders - they're already our leaders. It's not that some have a voice, and some don't - all have a voice and some just aren't being heard. It's time to uplift our young people and listen now if we want to see meaningful, effective change.

Hailey Cook, student of Fairport High School, Youth Mental Health Advisory Board member:

"During my time with Senator Brouk's Youth Mental Health Advisory Board, I learned valuable skills in regards to the political process and how legislation is passed. I am excited that I was able to create bills about issues I care about that will help my community."

Ishan Srivastava, student of West Irondequoit High School, Youth Mental Health Advisory Board member: "Being part of the YMHAB has been a transformative experience and it empowered me to share my voice and contribute to a meaningful change in our community's approach to mental health."

Student Lia Nevo, student of Bishop Kearny High School, Youth Mental Health Advisory Board member:

"I learned the importance of youth voices in helping to make changes for mental health awareness in the community."

RELATED LEGISLATION

2023-S8359

- 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
-

Relates to establishing a statewide youth mental health advisory board

January 22, 2024

In Senate Committee **Mental Health**

Sponsored by **Samra G. Brouk**

Do you support this bill?