



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Samra G. Brouk

## Governor Signs Brouk Bill to Create New York's 9-8-8 Mental Health Crisis And Suicide Prevention Number

SAMRA G. BROUK December 23, 2021

| ISSUE: **ACCESS TO MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES, MENTAL HEALTH, NATIONAL SUICIDE HOTLINE DESIGNATION ACT OF 2020, EMERGENCY SERVICES, CRISIS RESPONSE**

**ALBANY, NY** - Senator Samra Brouk's legislation was signed into law by Governor Kathy Hochul today, requiring that New York State create a 9-8-8 emergency line to be used alongside 9-1-1 (S6194B). This groundbreaking legislation represents a monumental shift in mental health emergency and crisis management response that acknowledges the severity of the mental health and substance abuse crisis facing our families across New York.

This legislation marks a pivotal change in how New York State will respond to mental health and substance use emergencies. Users can call or text 9-8-8 when experiencing a mental health crisis, and line operators will work in tandem with 9-1-1 to ensure that the proper party responds to the crisis—regardless of which number is dialed by the caller.

As New Yorkers continue to grapple with the COVID pandemic and its aftermath, it has become abundantly clear that the state must have a robust system in place to address mental health emergencies. In a time when families are feeling historic levels of strain—whether through the loss of a loved one, joblessness, or housing instability—the state must rise to the occasion to ensure that communities have trauma-informed, culturally competent resources available. While federal guidelines call for states to have a 9-8-8

line in place by July of 2022, this legislation goes further to ensure that there are appropriate training and reporting measures in place. The bill also provides for public service announcements and messaging to target hard to reach and historically underserved populations.

This legislation is part of Senator Brouk's larger effort to modernize New York State's infrastructure for mental health emergency response. Taking office less than a year after the tragic death of Daniel Prude, Brouk has worked to transform crisis response to ensure that all people receive compassionate and culturally-competent mental health care. Brouk chairs the newly formed Senate Committee on Mental Health, and has worked with stakeholders across the state to identify opportunities to improve mental health services for New Yorkers.

S6194B tasks the New York State Office of Mental Health with creating training guidelines for 9-8-8 crisis hotline center staff. Trainings will be focused on assessing callers for suicidal risk, providing crisis counseling and crisis intervention, offering referrals to mental health and/or substance use services, and on providing linguistically and culturally competent care. To that end, operators will receive training to ensure that they meet linguistic and cultural competency standards to better serve diverse communities.

The legislation also requires annual reporting from the Office of Mental Health and Office of Addiction Services and Support to provide base metrics on the usage of the line and ensure that communities are being responded to in an equitable and effective manner.

**Senator Samra Brouk:** "Right now, when a person is experiencing an episode of distress or is feeling suicidal, calling 911 and relying on law enforcement is often the only solution. These moments of crisis are beyond the scope of what law enforcement are trained to handle, and the result can be an unnecessary escalation of the situation. This legislation ensures that

people in need of support can call or text 9-8-8 to reach crisis hotline centers staffed by trained counselors. As Chair of the Senate Committee on Mental Health, I have heard too many stories from individuals in my community and across the state who have expressed how the current emergency response system has failed to meet their mental health needs. This legislation changes that. I am grateful to Governor Hochul for signing this important bill. Our focus now turns to ensuring that this lifesaving 9-8-8 hotline is fully funded in next year's State Budget."

**Assemblywoman Aileen Gunther:** "Many thanks to Governor Kathy Hochul for signing this important bill into law. The implementation of a three-digit mental health crisis lifeline has been a long time coming and the provisions of this bill will help New York State better serve hard-to-reach populations. I look forward to this lifesaving hotline going into effect and serving not only Orange and Sullivan Counties but the entire state in this time of great need."

**Harvey Rosenthal, CEO, New York Association of Psychiatric Rehabilitation Services (NYAPRS):** "Great thanks are due to Senator Brouk for her tireless efforts to see that New York puts in place a 9-8-8 mental health hotline program that assures that New Yorkers in crisis get access to a trained counselor. We greatly appreciate the support from the Governor and Assembly Mental Health Committee Chair Aileen Gunther, and look forward to an approved state budget with ample funding for a 9-8-8 program that ensures that the full diversity of New Yorkers get culturally appropriate crisis assistance when they need it most."

**Glenn Liebman, CEO, Mental Health Association in New York State, Inc (MHANYS):** "9-8-8 will help change the face of crisis services in New York. In coordination with Crisis Stabilization Centers and Mobile Crisis Teams, 9-8-8 will help families and individuals desperately in need of emergency behavioral health services get the response and support they

need. This legislation will help set the framework for implementation of 9-8-8 and we thank Senator Brouk for her leadership in this area.”

**Matthew Shapiro, Director of Public Affairs, National Alliance on Mental Illness-New York State (NAMI-NYS):** "NAMI-NYS wants to express our gratitude to Senator Brouk for her leadership in creating 9-8-8, which will replace 9-1-1 and provide a diversion from the criminal justice system and a gateway to recovery for those experiencing a mental health crisis. We look forward to working with Senator Brouk and Governor Hochul during the 2022 session to ensure that 9-8-8 is appropriately funded to provide 24/7 statewide coverage to all New Yorkers."

The 9-8-8 lifeline is to be operable by July 16, 2022, in accordance with federal guidelines. For years, mental health advocates and legislators worked toward the goal of creating a three-digit crisis hotline to connect those in need with help, and this year’s passage is the culmination of those efforts. In passing this legislation, which takes effect immediately, New York State is getting ahead of the federal mandate and mitigating the possibility of lengthy wait times and out-of-state transfers upon operation so that this lifeline is as effective as possible at serving our communities and saving lives.

Senator Samra Brouk also carries Daniel’s Law, S4814, in the Senate. Named for Daniel Prude, Daniel’s Law establishes state and regional councils and regional response units for mental health emergencies.

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#### RELATED LEGISLATION

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**2021-S6194B**

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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
  -

Relates to establishing a 9-8-8 suicide prevention and mental health crisis hotline system

April 14, 2021

Signed by Governor

Sponsored by Samra G. Brouk

Do you support this bill?