



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

John W. Mannion

Senator Mannion Bill Removing "Lunatic," "Lunacy," and other Outdated and Offensive Mental Health Language from State Law Signed by Governor

JOHN W. MANNION August 3, 2021

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SYRACUSE, NY – Senator John W. Mannion (D-Geddes,) Chairman of the Senate Disabilities Committee, today announced his bill (S.4777b) to remove outdated and offensive mental health language from state law has been signed by the governor. Taking effect immediately, the words “lunatic” and “lunacy” are eliminated from all statutes. The phrase “mentally ill person” is being replaced with “person with a mental disability.”

“Removing these outdated words from our laws sends a message of inclusion, compassion, and understanding across New York State,” said Senator Mannion. “Even with the great strides that have been made in the thirty years since the signing of the Americans with Disabilities Act, it is clear much more must be done. I’d like to thank Majority Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins for making the work of the Disabilities Committee a top priority and the governor for quickly signing this bill into law.”

Previously, Section 28 from the General Construction Law read:

Lunatic, mentally ill person, lunacy and mental illness. The terms lunatic, mentally ill person, lunacy and mental illness include every kind of unsoundness of mind except idiocy

or mental retardation.

This has been removed from state law and replaced with:

"Mental disability" means mental illness, intellectual disability, developmental disability, or an addictive disorder as defined in this section.

There were more than 30 instances of the term “mentally ill” still in use in state laws, all of which have been eliminated or replaced by Senator Mannion’s legislation.

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