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Contact: Soojin Choi | press@johnliusenate.com | 347-556-6335

SENATOR JOHN LIU PRAISES STATE BUDGET AGREEMENT REQUIRING INSURANCE COVERAGE FOR GAMBLING ADDICTION TREATMENT

ALBANY, NY – State Senator John Liu today highlighted a provision in the state budget passed this week to require insurance coverage for gambling addiction disorders, aligning important mental health services with the same requirements currently in place for alcohol and substance use disorder treatment. The measure comes on the heels of last year’s New York State Gaming Commission’s approval of three new casinos in New York City, which were authorized by voter referendum in 2013.

As New York has rapidly expanded access to legal gambling in recent years, including casinos, lottery games, horse racing, and mobile sports betting, experts have cautioned against increased risks of gambling addiction and the potential harmful effects on marginalized communities. In 2024, Senator Liu and Assembly Member Grace Lee partnered with community service providers to host a [gambling roundtable](#) that emphasized the need to reduce the negative impacts of legalized gambling on vulnerable populations.

Current New York law does not clearly require commercial insurers to cover treatment for gambling addiction unless the individual also has a substance use disorder. This budget agreement closes this gap by requiring coverage for gambling addiction treatment services regulated through the Office of Addiction Services and Supports. The inclusion reflects national recommendations under the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-5), a diagnostic standard for mental health disorders, published by the American Psychiatric Association, that is widely used by mental health professionals in the United States. Further, the Department of Financial Services will be required to report on gambling addiction insurance coverage, allowing the state to identify barriers to treatment and the extent of meaningful insurance coverage.

State Senator John Liu stated, “The expansion of legal gambling in New York City necessitates more measures to mitigate potential harm from gambling, similar to existing measures for other vices like drinking and smoking that state law has long permitted and regulated. It would be a mistake to allow insurance companies to treat gambling addictions only alongside substance abuse, just as it would be naive to neglect the ramifications of placing casinos in NYC on local residents. Requiring health insurance to cover gambling addiction is an imperative change that must come with the advent of new casinos, and I’m grateful to my colleagues and the governor for enacting this sound policy.”

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