



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Brad Hoylman-Sigal

## SENATOR HOYLMAN-SIGAL & ASSEMBLYMEMBER-ELECT LASHER PROPOSE “H.E.L.P. ACT” TO ADDRESS STAGGERING MENTAL HEALTH CRISIS ON NYC STREETS

SENATOR HOYLMAN-SIGAL & ASSEMBLYMEMBER-ELECT LASHER November 20, 2024

| ISSUE: **ACCESS TO MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES, STREET SAFETY, HOMELESSNESS**



New Bill Would Amend State Law to Expand Pool of Mental Health Professionals Able to Perform Clinical Evaluations for Involuntary Hospitalization and AOT

NEW YORK — State Senator Brad Hoylman-Sigal (D, WFP - Manhattan) and Assemblymember-Elect Micah Lasher (D – Manhattan) announced new legislation, the H.E.L.P. (“Harness Expertise of Licensed Professionals”) Act, to amend New York State Mental

Hygiene Law to expand the authority to perform clinical evaluations for involuntary hospitalization and assisted outpatient treatment (commonly known as “AOT”, established under Kendra’s Law) and require care coordination for persons with mental illness.

The H.E.L.P. Act, announced in the aftermath of a stabbing spree by an unstable person in Manhattan that left three dead, is intended to help address New York City’s mental health crisis by expanding the pool of mental health professionals able to perform clinical evaluations and temporarily hospitalize individuals who may pose a threat to themselves or others. If passed, the H.E.L.P Act would allow not only physicians to perform a clinical evaluation of a person’s need for involuntary hospitalization, but also psychiatric nurse practitioners, psychologists, and clinical social workers. The current restrictions prevent the system from making use of other mental health professionals who are equally qualified to perform these evaluations, exacerbates a systemic staffing shortage, and diverts physicians’ time from patient care. The bill does not expand the powers of police or adjust the standards required for commitment in any way.

The H.E.L.P. Act also requires that hospital administrators notify community mental health providers who have treated a patient previously when they are admitted to a hospital. This will help ensure better continuity of care and coordination between different layers of the healthcare system. Additionally, community healthcare providers, along with mental health government officials, must be notified upon discharge of a patient who was involuntarily committed.

**Senator Brad Hoylman-Sigal** said: “Yesterday’s stabbings were just the latest devastating example of the need to reform New York State’s mental hygiene law to address the continued fallout from the closure of thousands of mental health beds across the state over the last several decades, which has caused individuals struggling with mental illness to languish on the streets and in the subways. Rather than accept the status quo, the H.E.L.P.

Act will grant additional mental health experts, including psychiatric nurse practitioners, psychologists, and clinical social workers, the authority to clinically evaluate and require treatment for those experiencing severe mental health issues who may pose a threat to themselves or others. This will allow patients to be evaluated more quickly and ensure they have access to the treatment they need.”

**Assemblymember-Elect Micah Lasher** said: “It is not safe and it is not compassionate to leave people who are a danger to themselves or others to fend for themselves on the street or on the subway — and too often, it ends in tragedy. We must stop ignoring the lived reality of New Yorkers, in which walking down the street or taking the subway feels like a dicey proposition. We have tools under law to get people the help they need, and the H.E.L.P. Act will better enable their appropriate use.”

*The legislation proposed by Senator Hoylman-Sigal and Assemblymember-elect Lasher can be found [here](#).*