



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Shelley B. Mayer

Senator Mayer Stands with Mental Health Matters Students and Advocates

SHELLEY B. MAYER March 13, 2019

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**450 STUDENTS
AT MENTAL HEALTH
MATTERS DAY
IN ALBANY**

At Mental Health Matters Day, Over 450 Students, Advocates Urge Support for New York's Mental Health Needs

*Annual mental health advocacy day comes on the heels of new **Pew research showing** 70 percent of teens feel anxiety and depression are major problems among their peers*

Funding for School Mental Health Resource & Training Center among top priorities for students at Mental Health Matters Day

ALBANY, N.Y., March 13, 2019 — About 300 students and 150 mental health professionals and advocates from across New York State rallied together in Albany Wednesday for Mental Health Matters Day, a legislative advocacy event organized by the Mental Health Association in New York State (MHANYS).

In meetings with state lawmakers and in a rally at West Capitol Park, they called for further state action to support the mental health needs of New Yorkers. Three key issue areas—mental health education, workforce needs and housing—remained the focus of advocacy throughout the day.

Students shared their experiences with lawmakers to help them understand the importance of ongoing investment to address mental health in schools, and mental health professionals emphasized the need for cost-of-living adjustments in wages for the human service workforce and funding for housing for people with mental illness or those in recovery.

“About 70 percent of teens see anxiety and depression as major problems among their peers, according to the Pew Research Center,” said MHANYS CEO Glenn Liebman. “Following New York’s first-in-nation mental health education law, more students are beginning to better understand mental health as well as how and when to ask for help. We’re making progress, but as hundreds of students made clear today, further action is urgently needed to support mental wellness in schools and communities across New York State.”

Education Committee Chair, Senator Shelley B. Mayer said, “I am glad to stand with advocates on Mental Health Matters Day in support of funding and resources for students facing mental illness. Many mental health conditions begin in adolescence, and this provides an opportunity for schools to detect conditions and connect students and families with necessary resources. Early detection and treatment can mean a world of difference for the long term health of the students, their ability to graduate, and future career success. Thank

you to the Mental Health Association in New York State for your work and advocacy on this important issue.”

This is the first Mental Health Matters Day since the state law, which requires mental health instruction in all K-12 schools, went into effect. To help schools adopt the law’s requirements, MHANYS launched the School Mental Health Resource & Training Center last summer to provide educators and school districts with assistance and guidance as they develop new curriculum and create programs to support student mental health.

“Already, more than 50 percent of all public schools in New York State have accessed the School Mental Health Resource & Training Center for assistance, information or support,” **said Amy Molloy, the Center’s Director.** “Thousands of educators, parents and community members are using our website or taking advantage of in-person professional development sessions that we provide to school districts.”

To sustain the School Mental Health Center’s impact, MHANYS is now pushing for \$1 million in state funding—which matches the budget allocation it received in 2018—to keep the Center fully operational in the year ahead.

“To educate a student in public school, the average cost is about \$22,000 per year. For only an additional 33 cents per student, the School Mental Health Center is able to provide schools with the support and assistance they need to educate youth, families and staff about mental health. It’s a small yet critical investment that will improve the health and safety of students and communities,” **said MHANYS Public Policy Director John Richter.**

In advocating for the School Mental Health Center and its entire Mental Health Matters Day legislative agenda, MHANYS has found partners in the State Legislature and Governor’s Administration who understand the importance of promoting mental wellness and ending

the stigma related to mental illness.

Senator David Carlucci, chair of the Committee on Mental Health and Developmental Disabilities, said, “The Mental Health Association in New York State is a tremendous partner in advocating for fundamental changes to help people living with mental illness. Together, we are fighting for quality mental health services for our youth and ending the stigma often associated with seeking treatment. It is time wages increase for our human service workforce and people with mental illness or in recovery have more housing options. Thank you to all who joined me in saying mental health matters today and every day.”

About Mental Health Association in New York State, Inc.

The Mental Health Association in New York State, Inc. (MHANYS) is a nonprofit organization that works to end the stigma against mental illness and promotes mental health wellness in New York State. MHANYS achieves this through training, education, advocacy and policy, community-based partnership programming, and by connecting individuals and families to help. Following its successful efforts to secure approval of a law requiring mental health instruction in schools, MHANYS established the School Mental Health Resource & Training Center to facilitate effective implementation of the new law. Across the state, MHANYS has 26 regional MHA affiliates that are active in 50 counties. For more information, visit <https://mhanys.org/>