



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

David Carlucci

Carlucci Highlights Critical Legislation to Help Frontline Workers Experiencing Mental Health Trauma Due to COVID-19

SENATOR DAVID CARLUCCI August 3, 2020

| ISSUE: **TRAUMA INFORMED CARE ADVISORY COUNCIL; TRAUMA; MENTAL HEALTH; COVID-19;**



(Albany, NY) – Senator David Carlucci (D-Rockland/Westchester) sponsored and passed nation-leading legislation ([S.8608A](#)) last month to better address mental health trauma impacting frontline workers during the COVID-19 pandemic. As frontline workers face war-like circumstances, mental health experts warn that trauma-informed care must be addressed early to minimize the long-term effects of trauma, which could lead to post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Psychological trauma is often caused by a distressing event

that is typically out of a person's control and often causes the individual to feel in danger; however, it can also be caused by any situation leaving a person feeling overwhelmed and isolated.

Carlucci's legislation will create a first of its kind, Frontline Workers Trauma Informed Care Advisory Council within the New York State Office of Mental Health. The Council will be made up of mental health and substance abuse experts who will help to support better access to trauma-related behavioral health supports and preventative services for frontline workers. The Council will do this by identifying services, training organizations and developing systems to inform and refer frontline workers.

Senator David Carlucci said, "This Council will benefit and service essential workers. The burden on their shoulders can easily cause emotional trauma, which is why we must focus on early intervention. This legislation will help frontline workers access the care they need, while proactively addressing the mental health and substance abuse crises to come, as COVID-19 cases slow and frontline workers have more time to process their emotions."

Currently, frontline workers are battling the fear of contracting the virus, potentially exposing their family members, and shortages of personal protective equipment. According to the Mental Health Association in New York State (MHANYS), it has been shown in other pandemics and global health crises that there can be collective trauma, which means a group is collectively impacted by a traumatic experience or event. Mental health experts therefore are concerned we will see higher rates of anxiety, depression, substance use issues, acute stress and, eventually, PTSD among essential workers. Already, the risk of addiction, depressive disorder and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) have doubled between February and April 2020, according to [The Mental Health Index: U.S. Worker Edition](#). Mental health experts also cite potential increases in suicide among frontline workers, especially those in the health care field. The Mental Health Association in New York State (MHANYS)

cites in a survey out of China, at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, about 50 percent of physicians and nurses reported symptoms of depression, 44 percent reported symptoms of anxiety, and 34 percent reported insomnia. Lawmakers and mental health advocates believe this Council will help in getting frontline workers the help they need in coping with the symptoms of trauma before the mental health crisis gets much worse.

The NYS Conference of Local Mental Hygiene Directors, who is made up of health and substance abuse services experts, found that since the COVID-19 pandemic began, about 50% more people are seeking crisis services, and some counties report more than a 50% increase in substance use related overdoses where the incidents can be directly tied to COVID-19 related reactions. Additionally, frontline workers are disproportionately Black and Latino and have been experiencing disproportionately higher rates of COVID-19 infection and death, experiences which can certainly cause trauma. However, according to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, Blacks and Latinos have substantially lower access to mental health and substance-use treatment services. Carlucci said the Council's work will be paramount in communicating access to services and getting individuals in need life-saving help.

This legislation is supported by the NYS Conference of Local Mental Hygiene Directors, Inc. and the MHANYS. The bill has passed in the Assembly, and Carlucci said he would like to see the bill signed into law as soon as possible.

RELATED LEGISLATION

2019-S8608A

- 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

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Relates to establishing the frontline workers trauma informed care advisory council

June 18, 2020

Senate Floor Calendar

Sponsored by **David Carlucci**

Do you support this bill?