



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Samra G. Brouk

Senator Samra Brouk Introduces Bill Establishing a Three-Digit National Mental Health Crisis Line

SAMRA G. BROUK April 27, 2021

| ISSUE: **ACCESS TO MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES**

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

April 27, 2021

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Albany, NY - This month, Senator Samra Brouk (SD-55) introduced New York State Senate Bill S6194, which would establish the three-digit, 9-8-8 national suicide prevention hotline number that individuals experiencing a mental health crisis, or their loved ones, could call or text to be connected to trained mental health counselors. The shortened, three-digit number will be easier to remember and allow more people to get help when it is needed.

The counselors staffing the 9-8-8 crisis hotline centers will be trained to respond to mental health emergencies and could coordinate with 9-8-8 operators to deploy mobile crisis teams to individuals in need. These support teams are staffed by mental health professionals, peers,

and family advocates instead of police officers, whose response to mental health crises in the 55th District and across the country has resulted in unnecessary violence and death.

Furthermore, S6194 would mandate that calls to 9-1-1 reporting a mental health crisis would be transferred to 9-8-8, and operators monitoring both lines would be able to coordinate a law enforcement, fire, or medical response if needed.

Last October, the National Suicide Hotline Designation Act of 2020 was signed into Federal law, establishing 9-8-8 as a nationwide suicide prevention hotline number and requiring each state to implement the system by July 2022. This bill would enable New York to begin building the necessary statewide infrastructure for this life-saving crisis response system.

This bill has also been introduced into the New York State Assembly as Assembly Bill A7177 by Assemblymember Aileen Gunther, Chair of the Assembly Mental Health Committee.

S6194/A7177 was announced today at a press conference in Albany's West Capitol Park, along with Senator Pete Harckham (SD-40), Assemblymember Aileen Gunther (AD-100), and mental health advocates from across the state.

Senator Samra Brouk, SD-55, Senate Bill sponsor: “As Chair of the Senate Mental Health Committee, I am proud to sponsor Senate Bill S6194. This bill will transform the way New York responds to mental health emergencies. Our current systems do not work for New Yorkers in need. S6194 would both shorten the hotline number required for individuals to access help and ensure that only trained, compassionate mental health professionals will be the ones to respond to these mental health crises. We cannot continue to respond to people in need with violence. I look forward to working with my colleagues in the Legislature to pass S6194 and usher in a much-needed transformation of mental health services in our state.”

Assemblymember Aileen Gunther, AD-100, Assembly Bill sponsor: “The 9-8-8 hotline is truly revolutionary. There’s no question we’re in the midst of a mental health crisis, and people need somewhere to turn. In addition to creating the hotline, our bill will also expand the use of mobile crisis teams across the state. This will improve response time, reduce the workload of law enforcement, and most importantly, it will help get people the care they need.”

Senator Pete Harckham, SD-40, Chair of the Senate Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Committee: “The initiation of a statewide suicide and mental health crisis hotline system will save countless lives on a daily basis, and I commend Senator Brouk for her steadfast efforts in this regard. One recommendation we received during hearings before the Joint Senate Task Force on Opioids, Addiction & Overdose was that residents be able to access crisis intervention professionals ready to help at a moment’s notice. Certainly, we need to continue to look for new ways to safeguard residents, like making the 9-8-8 hotline a reality.”

Matthew Shapiro, Associate Director, Public Affairs, NAMI-NYS: “Reforming the criminal justice-mental illness interface and ensuring that a mental health crisis is met with a mental health response is of the utmost importance to NAMI-NYS. Appropriately addressing a mental health crisis begins with having a mechanism to inform first responders that the incident they are responding to is not of a criminal nature. New York has an opportunity to introduce such a tool by implementing a 988 number to use for a mental health crisis. A 988 number will provide a gateway towards recovery and away from the criminal justice and corrections system which is disproportionately represented by people living with a mental illness. NAMI-NYS is tremendously grateful to our Mental Health Chair Senator Samra Brouk and to Assemblymember Aileen Gunther for fighting to ensure that New Yorkers in a mental health crisis receive help and not punishment by introducing S.6194, which would implement a 988 in New York.”

Glenn Liebman, CEO, Mental Health Association in New York State (MHANYS): “Crisis services for individuals with behavioral health issues are in need of real reform. We need to have a system in place that can provide an immediate response to someone in desperate need of services and supports. This 988 Legislation combined with urgent care stabilization centers and mobile crisis teams can help change a patchwork of services into a pathway of services for those individuals in crisis. We are very appreciative of Senator Brouk and Assemblymember Gunther for introducing this important legislation to help reform crisis services in New York.”

Harvey Rosenthal, CEO, New York Association of Psychiatric Rehabilitation Services: “A specialized 988 mental health crisis response line will offer the right kind of support to New Yorkers in distress at a time when they need it the most. This very timely legislation, in combination with new federal dollars, will allow us to launch a far more appropriate mental health rather than a police first response by the required July 2022 start date.”

Sharon MacDougall, MSW, MBA, MS, LCSW-R, Cortland County DCS and Chair of CLMHD’s Mental Health Committee: “The NYS Conference of Local Mental Hygiene Directors (CLMHD) has been working closely with the State Office of Mental Health on planning and implementation of the FCC 988 initiative through a multi-stakeholder coalition and we applaud Senator Brouk for her engagement on this issue and look forward to collaborating with her and her colleagues in the legislature on ways to help facilitate the effective rollout of this initiative statewide.”

For more information on S6194/A7177, visit

<https://www.nysenate.gov/legislation/bills/2021/s6194>

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New York State Senator Samra Brouk (pronounced Sah-mra Br-uuk) represents the incredibly diverse 55th Senate District, stretching from the southern shores of Lake Ontario, through Rochester’s Neighborhood of the Arts, and south to Finger Lakes wine country. It includes Victor, East Bloomfield,

West Bloomfield, Richmond, Bristol, South Bristol, Canadice, and Naples in Ontario County and Rush, Mendon, Pittsford, Perinton, Penfield, East Rochester, and Irondequoit, plus the east side of the City of Rochester in Monroe County. Senator Brouk serves as the Chair of the Mental Health Committee and sits on Health, Education, Elections, Women's Issues, Aging, and Alcoholism and Substance Abuse committees.

RELATED LEGISLATION

2021-S6194

- 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 a 9-8-8 suicide prevention and mental health crisis hotline system

April 14, 2021

Signed by Governor

Sponsored by **Samra G. Brouk**

Do you support this bill?