



MEMORANDUM IN SUPPORT
Bill # S.5672/A.8611

The Coalition of Behavioral Health Agencies **strongly supports** bill number S.5672/A.8611, legislation that would eliminate the expiration and repeal of Timothy's Law (Chapter 748 of the laws of 2006).

The Coalition represents over 120 community-based providers of mental health and substance abuse agencies in metropolitan New York City. Our members constitute a broad cross section of service providers – all sizes from very small to very large; treatment and rehabilitation-oriented; outpatient and residential; focused on linguistically and culturally specific populations and on many special needs – serving more than 350,000 individuals each day in the five boroughs of New York City and neighboring counties.

By making New York State's landmark mental health parity law permanent, this bill will ensure private insurance coverage to millions of New Yorker's with mental illness. Besides being a law that regulates insurance practices in New York State, Timothy's Law also prevents discrimination. It prohibits health insurance contracts from setting higher deductibles or more restrictive limits for diagnosis and treatment of mental illness than physical illness. Such statutes are basic affirmations of social and government policy that acknowledge inequities in our system and offer procedures to address them, and should therefore be made permanent.

Lack of insurance is a major reason for people with mental illness to not receive care. According to the study conducted by the New York State Superintendent of Insurance, coverage, access and affordability for mental health services under private insurance plans have increased at significant levels under Timothy's Law. Parity in mental health treatment has enabled New Yorker's with mental illness to achieve success at work, in school and at home.

For these reasons, we strongly urge the passage of S.5672/A.8611 and thank you for your consideration.