

Legislative News

By Marsha Wineburgh, DSW, LCSW-R, Chair

A lot has been happening since 2017 began. Our very energetic and competent advocate, Mary Ann Mclean, resigned her position as Albany lobbyist after 24 years of representing our interests. Retirement beckoned and she joined her husband full time in Kissimmee, Florida.

Luckily, however, with her assistance we have enlisted two lobbyists to continue representing us. We have contracted with the Elk Street Group to provide services including the monitoring of health and mental health legislation, presenting our views to the Legislature and the executive branch of the state government, attending public hearings and committee meetings, and other related activities to insure our views are presented.

Budget Issue

Hiring the new lobbyists occurred at just the right moment. February-March is the time when the Governor's draft budget is presented to the legislature for approval. Hidden in this budget's multiple pages is an amendment to the Public Health Laws titled, Health Care Regulation Modernization. This amendment allows a "team," composed of the Commissioners of Health, the Office of Mental Health and the Office of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Services, to recommend the fundamental restructuring of licensing statutes, policies and regulations to "increase quality, reduce costs and improve health outcomes."


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our licensing laws in their mental health facilities. To oppose this amendment, we have joined a social work coalition composed of the deans of social work schools and the NASWs.

Other legislative issues include reintroducing our Workers' Compensation bill to allow LCSWs to be reimbursed for psychotherapy services for worker compensation patients. Our LLC legislation, that will allow us to legally partner with other professionals, will also be reintroduced.

Protect LGBT Minors

Finally, we have submitted a Memorandum in Support of A.3977 (Glick) / S.263 (Hoylman). This bill amends the Education Law to prohibit mental health professionals from engaging in sexual orientation change efforts with a patient under the age of eighteen, and expanding the definition of professional misconduct with respect to mental health professionals. 

OUR MEMORANDUM READS:

“The New York State Society for Clinical Social Worker (NYSSCSW), strongly supports A.3977 / S.263. This bill would protect minors under the age of eighteen from mental health practitioners seeking to change their sexual orientation.

The New York State Society for Clinical Social Work, founded in 1968, represents the views of clinical social workers in the public and private sector throughout New York State. We provide the majority of mental health services (about 60 percent) in the United States and practice in virtually every setting in the health care delivery system, including: medical and psychiatric hospitals, mental health clinics, AIDs treatment facilities, managed care organizations, trauma centers, research settings, schools and the criminal justice system.

We support the idea that the exploration and discovery of one's sexual orientation is a natural process; that being gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender is not an illness, disease or shortcoming.

We fully support the protection of all LGBT minors.”