

November 1, 2018

Alphonso David, Esq.  
Counsel to the Governor  
Office of the Governor  
State Capitol, Executive Chamber  
Albany, NY 12224

**Re: AMA support for A.3694-C – An Act to Amend the Insurance Law, in relation to establishing the mental health and substance use disorder parity report act**

Dear Mr. David:

On behalf of the American Medical Association (AMA) and our physician and medical student members, I am writing to urge Governor Cuomo to sign Assembly Bill 3694-C into law. By doing so, Governor Cuomo would further efforts by the Department of Financial Services and the Commissioner of Health to measure compliance with state and federal mental health and substance use disorder parity laws. In our view, acquiring this data would be a very good step forward for the state of New York as it works to ensure that New Yorkers who need treatment for a mental health or substance use disorder actually receive it.

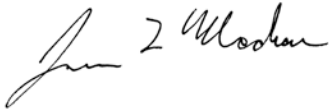
The AMA was struck by the data presented by the bill sponsors showing how health insurance companies routinely deny coverage for mental health and substance use disorder care. We also were very concerned by findings of higher co-pays for those seeking care for a mental health or substance use disorder as compared to medical and surgical care. At a time when New York—and the rest of the nation—is facing an opioid-related overdose and death epidemic that is killing tens of thousands, such disparate care is gravely concerning.

We agree with our colleagues at the Medical Society of the State of New York that mental health and substance use disorder parity laws have been the law of New York—and every other state—for at least 10 years, but health insurance company compliance continues to lag. Assembly Bill 3694-C will provide important data to better compare requirements for accessing benefits that are applied to mental health and substance use disorder treatment and coverage as compared with those applied to medical/surgical benefits. The compliance report, particularly if made available to key stakeholders and open for public inspection to patient advocates, will help regulators and others identify where appropriate oversight and enforcement are necessary.

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It is clear, that in New York and across the country that an overwhelming number of people needing treatment for an addiction are not receiving it. While we have a long way to go, Assembly Bill 3694-C is a very good step forward, and we urge the governor's signature. If you have any questions, please contact Daniel Blaney-Koen, JD, Senior Legislative Attorney, AMA Advocacy Resource Center, at [daniel.blaney-koen@ama-assn.org](mailto:daniel.blaney-koen@ama-assn.org) or (312) 464-4954.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Jim L. Madara".

James L. Madara, MD

cc: Medical Society of the State of New York