SAMPLE EMAIL/LETTER SCRIPT FOR NYS Mental Health and Substance Use Disorder Parity Report Act

(S.1156-C/A.3694-C)

Dear Governor Cuomo,

I am writing to urge you to sign the **Mental Health and Substance Use Disorder Parity Report Act** (S.1156-C/A.3694-C) into law, which received strong, bi-partisan support from the Legislature with a vote 60-0 vote in the Senate and 137-1 in the Assembly!

The legislation directs the Superintendent of the Department of Financial Services to collect certain key data points and elements from insurers and health plans in order to scrutinize and analyze if they are in compliance with the federal (The Paul Wellstone and Pete Domenici Mental Health Parity and Addiction Equity Act of 2008) and state (Chapter 748 of the laws of 2006 – “Timothy’s Law”) mental health and substance use (MH/SUD) disorder parity laws. The information collected would be analyzed and used for the preparation of a parity compliance report in the annual “Consumer Guide to Health Insurers” issued by Department of Financial Services.

As a [psychiatrist; psychologist; social worker; family advocate; peer] caring and treating patients on a daily basis, I can personally attest to the need for this type of annual disclosure from insurers and health plans, recognizing that although federal and state parity laws have been on the books for over a decade, there still exists industry patterns of disparity between coverage criteria imposed on MH/SUD care and treatment as compared to other covered services. This legislation will enable a comparison between requirements for accessing benefits that are applied to MH/SUD as compared with those applied to medical/surgical benefits.

Among the areas where disparity continues to be cited are: (a) rates of utilization review as well as rate of approval and denial for care and treatment; (b) the numbers of prior or concurrent authorization requests along with the number of denials for such requests; (c) medical necessity criteria used by insurers and health plans to make determinations with respect to prior authorization, continuing care or discharge; (d) percentage of claims paid for in-network and out-of-network MH/SUD care and treatment; and, (e) network adequacy and provider networks. The consequences of non-compliance with the MH/SUD parity laws can be devastating at a time when the State is confronting rising incidences of mental health and substance use disorders as well as suicides.

In your tenure as Governor and public office, you have taken a strong stance and recognized the importance of compliance with the federal and state MH/SUD parity laws as a mechanism for maintaining and enhancing access to care. We hope you will affirm your continued support of the parity laws by enacting this legislation, which will allow New York to be among the first in the nation to require such specific disclosures. The lives of New Yorkers depend on compliance and enforcement of the MH/SUD parity laws!

Sincerely,

[Full Name, Credentials]

[City], NY