**Memorandum in Support: NASW-NYS/NYC supports the passage of Daniel’s Law (S.3670/A.4697)**

The National Association of Social Workers is the professional organization for social workers across the country. The New York State and New York City chapter (NASW-NYS/NYC) is responsible for advocating for the nearly 62,000 licensed social workers in the state as well as their clients. NASW-NYS/NYC strongly supports Senate and Assembly bill S.3670/A.4697, known as Daniel’s Law. The passage of this bill would fundamentally shift New York State’s response to mental health and substance use crises away from law enforcement and towards a public health-led model centered on care, dignity, and de-escalation.

Daniel’s Law is named in honor of Daniel Prude, a Black man who died during a police response to a mental health crisis in Rochester in 2020. His tragic death exposed a systemic failure in New York’s emergency response system, one in which people experiencing psychiatric distress are often met by police rather than trained mental health professionals. Often, this leads to harmful consequences. This bill seeks to establish a health-centered approach that will reduce the risk of harm and ensure individuals in crisis receive appropriate care.

The proposed legislation would establish a statewide emergency and crisis response infrastructure grounded in the following principles:

* A dedicated Emergency and Crisis Response Council to design and oversee the implementation of non-police crisis response teams;
* Coordination with 911 and 988 systems to ensure timely dispatch of trained personnel;
* Regional pilot programs and the creation of a Behavioral Health Crisis Technical Assistance Center;
* A requirement that at least 51% of council members and advisory participants are individuals with lived experience or their family members.

This legislation is especially crucial for advancing racial and economic equity in New York State. Communities of color are disproportionately impacted by police-involved crisis responses, which often escalate rather than de-escalate distress. Replacing police-led responses with community-based professionals, such as social workers, peer specialists, and health care providers, reduces trauma, promotes trust in the community, and improves long-term outcomes for mental health in the State.

As social workers, we are ethically bound to uphold the dignity and worth of every person. Daniel’s Law is directly aligned with our professional values and with decades of evidence pointing to the effectiveness of trauma-informed care. NASW-NYS/NYC believes that a crisis should not be a crime, and that care, not criminalization, must be the foundation of our emergency response system.

For all of the above reasons, the NASW-NYS/NYC Chapter enthusiastically supports S.3670/A.4697.

Signed,

The National Association of Social Workers, New York State and New York City Chapters



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