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**LAST MINUTE AMENDMENT BY GOVERNOR HOCHUL ELIMINATES MENTAL HEALTH CARE FROM THOSE MOST IN NEED**

NEW YORK, NY - Amidst a worsening mental health crisis in New York State, and with little explanation, Governor Hochul has excluded one type of licensed NYS therapist from the bill requiring blanket health insurance for mental health treatment. The result will be a lack of needed care for some extremely vulnerable New Yorkers.

A bill known as A1171A passed the State Legislature in 2022 with widespread support. The bill says that health insurance policies must cover outpatient treatment by all mental health practitioners.

That's a category that includes 4 types of psychotherapists in New York:

Licensed Creative Arts Therapists, Licensed Mental Health Counselors, Licensed Marriage and Family Therapists, and Licensed Psychoanalysts. All 4 categories have standardized and state approved requirements for education, supervised post- graduate practice and continuing education.

**But the governor struck Licensed Creative Arts Therapists from the bill via non-public approval memo just before signing. Licensed Creative Arts Therapists make up 14 percent of all licensed mental health practitioners that were covered in the bill.**

Creative arts therapies are especially effective for treating people who have lived through trauma and for people who struggle to benefit from talk therapy. This includes children, teenagers and those with severe psychiatric needs.

But some New Yorkers will not have insurance coverage to see a Licensed Creative Arts Therapist or may risk losing their mental health provider when they have to change insurance for any reason.

Psychotherapy sessions provided by Licensed Creative Arts Therapists are currently covered by several large insurance companies, including CIGNA, United Healthcare, and Aetna. Healthfirst NY- an Affordable Care Act plan also covers them. One of the governor's arguments for the removal of Licensed Creative Arts Therapists was fear of increased cost to the state, which is inaccurate.

Licensed Creative Arts Therapists are Masters -level licensed mental health practitioners, trained in psychotherapy and in specific arts disciplines which may include art therapy, dance/movement therapy, drama therapy, music therapy, and poetry therapy. They are trained in clinical practice and human development as well as creative arts to provide appropriate services (*from the NYS Office of Professions website: <https://www.op.nysed.gov/creative-arts-therapists>*)

**This last-minute decision will have a significant and highly detrimental impact on the availability of affordable mental health services across New York State.**