



## Legislation Text

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**File #:** Res 0330-2022, **Version:** \*

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### Res. No. 330

Resolution calling on the New York State Legislature to pass and the Governor to sign, A.302/S.844, requiring at least a ratio of one clinical, non-student mental health staff member per one thousand students on all SUNY and CUNY campuses.

By Council Members Louis, Hanif, Brewer, Restler, Hudson and Joseph

Whereas, The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention defines mental health as the emotional, social and psychological well-being of an individual; and

Whereas, According to the World Health Organization, depression, anxiety and psychological distress are common and serious medical conditions that negatively affect how people feel, the way they think and how they act; and

Whereas, Depression, anxiety and distress can decrease a person's ability to function at school, at work and at home, according to the Encyclopedia of Psychology; and

Whereas, According to the National Alliance on Mental Illness, about 21 million U.S. adults-8 percent of the population-had at least one major depressive episode in 2020; and

Whereas, Mental health issues, especially depression and anxiety, are a leading health cause of college failure and dropout; and

Whereas, Depression and anxiety can impair students' engagement and academic performance and contribute to substance abuse that further impedes academic progress; and

Whereas, Based on the 2018 Healthy CUNY (City University of New York) survey of CUNY community colleges and 4-year college students, it is estimated that 40,329 undergraduates report symptoms of

depression, 47,662 report symptoms of anxiety disorders and 40,818 report symptoms associated with moderate or severe psychological distress; and

Whereas, According to the Hope Center for College, Community and Justice, students with household incomes lower than \$30,000 a year and females report higher levels of, and are at higher risk for, developing depression, anxiety or psychological distress; and

Whereas, To assist students to get help for depression, anxiety disorders, psychological distress, and other mental health conditions, CUNY and the State University of New York (SUNY) offer a variety of campus services and referrals to community services; and

Whereas, As the COVID-19 global pandemic persists, CUNY and SUNY students continue to grapple with prevailing uncertainty, fear, anxiety, trauma and depression; and

Whereas, According to SUNY, most mental health disorders have their peak onset during young adulthood and by the age 25 years, 75 percent of those who have a mental health disorder have had their first onset; and

Whereas, According to a study by the Healthy Minds Network, during the COVID-19 crisis, over 40 percent of CUNY students said they felt depressed or anxious and half said they needed more mental health care; and

Whereas, According to the International Accreditation of Counseling Services (IACS), the minimum recommended staffing ratios should be in the range of one professional mental health staff member (excluding trainees) to every 1,000 to 1,500 students, depending on services offered and other campus mental health needs; and

Whereas, The ratio was originally established through the combination of empirical analysis and

judgment of experienced counseling center directors who were leading experts in their field, according to IACS; and

Whereas, The reported staffing ratios in CUNY campuses are in excess of one mental health clinician to over 2,000 students, according to Gotham Gazette; and

Whereas, Moreover, students enrolled on CUNY campuses pay a fee for mental health services, adding to the barriers to access; and

Whereas, Untreated or undiagnosed mental health conditions have a significant impact on college students, as 64 percent of students who leave college do so for mental health-related reasons and suicide is the second leading cause of death for college students, according to the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention; and

Whereas, Many students who experience mental health challenges rely on school counselors, teachers and other staff for support according to the University of Michigan School of Social Work; and

Whereas, According to CUNY Rising Alliance, more resources are needed so all students can seek help to reduce the burden of mental health problems; and

Whereas, A.302/S.844 sponsored by Assemblymember Richard Gottfried and Senator Andrew Gounardes, would require a minimum ratio of one clinical, non-student mental health staff member per one thousand students on all CUNY and SUNY campuses; and

Whereas, Under A.302/S.844, each CUNY and SUNY campus will be required to establish a board of experts and advisors within two years to study and make updates to the clinician-to-student ratio; and

Whereas, According to Young Invincibles, increasing mental health counselors and making them more

accessible will help those who struggle by ensuring adequate resources; and

Whereas, We must take action now to expand the mental health services that these students require to ensure that our schools are safe spaces for young people to get the support they need and to ensure that CUNY and SUNY campuses are required to staff an adequate number of licensed, mental health professionals to meet the specific needs of the unique student populations; now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Council of the City of New York calls on the New York State Legislature to pass and the Governor to sign, A.302/S.844, requiring at least a ratio of one clinical, non-student mental health staff member per one thousand students on all SUNY and CUNY campuses.

VM

6/14/2022

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