



Legislation Text

File #: Res 0443-2004, **Version:** A

Res. No. 443-A

Resolution urging Governor Pataki and the New York State Office of Mental Health to request that the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) reopen the Project Liberty Program, which provided counseling to individuals, families and groups who were seriously traumatized by the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks in New York City.

By Council Members Lopez, Addabbo, Barron, Comrie, Jackson, Nelson, Palma, Sanders, Gerson, Stewart, Gentile, Brewer, Weprin and The Public Advocate (Ms. Gotbaum)

Whereas, The terrorist attacks that occurred in New York City and Washington, D.C. on September 11, 2001 shocked the nation, affecting many thousands of New Yorkers, including friends and relatives of those who lost their lives, people who were injured, those who escaped, rescue and relief workers, people who saw it happen from nearby streets or windows, people who saw it over and over again on television and people who lost their jobs or homes as a result of the tragedy; and

Whereas, Project Liberty, an outreach and crisis counseling program that provided, free of charge, supportive therapy to individuals, families and groups affected by the attacks, was created shortly after the disaster and funded by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA); and

Whereas, Project Liberty provided services in New York City and ten surrounding counties, including Delaware, Dutchess, Nassau, Orange, Putnam, Rockland, Suffolk, Sullivan, Ulster and Westchester, and was administered by the New York State Office of Mental Health (NYSOMH) in collaboration with local governments and provider agencies; and

Whereas, Project Liberty offered face-to-face outreach crisis counseling and education services, helping disaster survivors to understand that in most cases their emotional reactions were normal and helping them to develop coping skills that would allow them to return to their pre-disaster levels of functioning; and

Whereas, Under the program, more than one million New Yorkers received free, anonymous, face-to-face counseling and public education services from more than 100 mental health providers, as well as many other community service organizations; and

Whereas, New York State discontinued Project Liberty service delivery activities after December 31, 2003, except for two specific populations, members of the New York City Fire Department (FDNY) and New York City school children; and

Whereas, New cases of post-traumatic stress related to 9/11 are still being diagnosed and the director of the FDNY Counseling Services Unit and other medical experts have said that extending the program is important because symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder often do not surface until years after a tragic event; and

Whereas, New York Senator Charles Schumer reported, in a September 7, 2003 press release, that federal officials had indicated that they were amenable to continuing Project Liberty if New York State requested an extension, but neither Governor Pataki nor NYSOMH made that request; now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the City Council of the City of New York urges Governor Pataki and the New York State Office of Mental Health to request that the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) reopen the Project Liberty Program, which provided counseling to individuals, families and groups who were seriously traumatized by the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks in New York City.