



New York State Society for Clinical Social Work, Inc.

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Memorandum in Support

Re: **SB8812/AB8387-A**

An ACT to extend the Workers' Compensation Board's authority to resolve medical bill disputes and simplify the process.

The New York State Society for Clinical Social Workers (NYSSCSW) strongly supports SB8812/AB8387-A, legislation which given additional authority would extend to injured workers the freedom of choice in the selection of practitioners to deliver covered psychotherapy services for the treatment of mental, emotional, behavioral and social parameters of job-related illness, injury, disability and impairment.

The New York State Society for Clinical Social Work, founded in 1968, represents the views of clinical social workers in the public and private sectors throughout New York State. Licensed clinical social workers provide the majority of mental health services (about 60 percent) in the United States and practice in virtually every setting in the health care delivery system, including: medical and psychiatric hospitals, mental health clinics, AIDs treatment facilities, managed care organizations, trauma centers, research settings, schools and the criminal justice system.

As the organization representing the one of the largest number of clinicians in New York State, we provide assessment and evaluation, diagnosis, and treatment of the full spectrum of mental and emotional disorders, ranging from anxiety and phobias to schizophrenia and manic- depression, as well as family conflicts and work-related problems.

The intent of workers' compensation health care is to help the incapacitated return to work and productivity as quickly as possible. Stress, anxiety and depression which often accompany the pain and increased dependency caused by injury, complicated by financial hardship, make access to mental health services critical to injured workers who seek assistance. This bill does not add a new category of care, but expands geographically the pool of qualified providers available to treat the mental side effects of injury. Currently only psychiatrists and licensed psychologists are able to provide

these services. In as much as the New York Supreme Court has determined that the scopes of practice for LCSWs and clinical psychologists are equivalent [807 NYS 2nd 516], this legislation merely reflects changes in the licensing laws enacted in 2002.

In regard to cost issues, we have attempted to obtain the data from the Workers' Compensation Board to demonstrate that outpatient mental health services have historically been a very small percentage of annual workers' compensation claims. Nationally, mental health services represent less than 4% of the health care budget and the vast majority of this percentage is for inpatient care, not outpatient. We firmly believe that a request from the Executive for this information would substantiate our position and therefore lead to a conclusion that adding clinical social workers as eligible providers will not result in any significant cost increase. Furthermore, since the Workers' Compensation Board sets the reimbursement rate for providers, cost should offer no significant problem and might even yield savings.

As one of the core independent mental health professions providing services within an integrated health care delivery system, inclusion of the clinical social work perspective in the Workers' Compensation services is logical and essential.

For the above stated reasons, the NYS Society of Clinical Social Work, Inc. **strongly urges passage of SB8812/AB8387-A .**

For further information contact:

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