



150 State Street, 4th Floor
Albany, New York 12207

Voice 518-463-1896
Fax 518-463-3364
www.scaany.org

Karen Schimke
President and CEO

Memorandum in Support
S. 5672 (Huntley)/ A. 8611 (Morelle)

An Act to eliminate the expiration and repeal of Timothy's Law

The Schuyler Center for Analysis and Advocacy was a strong supporter of Timothy's Law and a member of the Timothy's Law Campaign. Timothy's Law requires commercial insurance carriers in New York to provide coverage for the treatment of mental health and chemical dependency services at the same level as treatment of other health conditions.

Timothy's Law is scheduled to expire at the end of 2009 because a sunset was included in the original law in order to study its impact. Advocates and organizations working with people with psychiatric disabilities came to know that the law improved access to services. Now the May 2009 report by the Superintendent of Insurance conclusively found that, since the passage of Timothy's law, "more New Yorkers are receiving higher levels of mental health coverage." The report also found that the cost impact was "less than one half of one percent" of the average total monthly policy cost. A survey of small employers included in the report showed that most had "little reaction" to the cost or benefit changes.

It is also important to remember that the federal parity law does not provide all the protections of Timothy's Law. Unlike the federal parity law, Timothy's Law requires that all large group health plans that provide surgical and medical benefits must also provide mental health benefits. If Timothy's Law sunsets, these large group policies would not be required to cover mental health and there is the possibility of the erosion of some of the gains that have been made in providing these important benefits.

For these reasons, SCAA supports this legislation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Karen Schimke' in a cursive script.

Karen Schimke
President and CEO

June 2009