



National Alliance on Mental Illness

Statement on the New York State Assembly Passage of A.3080: the HALT Solitary Confinement Act

June 12, 2018

The National Alliance on Mental Illness-New York State (NAMI-NYS) applauds the New York State Assembly for passing the A.3080- "Humane Alternatives to Long-Term Solitary Confinement" Act (the HALT Solitary Confinement Act). The United Nations has deemed solitary confinement a form of torture. While NAMI-NYS understands that solitary confinement is a tool to ensure the safety of correction officers and inmates alike, it is imperative that it is a tool that is used responsibly and humanely in order to prevent future mental health issues that can derive from the trauma of solitary confinement. It is inexcusable that there is currently no cap to the amount of time someone can be kept in solitary. The HALT Act would set a maximum stint in solitary at two weeks.

This issue is also extremely important to the one-in-four families in New York State impacted by mental illness as one of the negative outcomes generated by the lack of availability of appropriate mental health services is the overrepresentation of people living with psychiatric disorders in the correctional system. NAMI-NYS believes that no one living with a mental illness should be subjected to solitary confinement as it can make their symptoms worse, especially those with psychosis. Preventing this practice is another of the reforms in A.3080.

While we praise the Assembly for the actions we also urge their colleagues in the Senate to follow their lead and also pass the bill. New York must prioritize halting the use of torturous practices that generate life-long mental illness. Addressing this issue is necessary to create a mentally healthy New York State.