



CalLEN-LORDE



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jamie@nychy.org | (347)779-2352

ADVOCATES APPLAUD PASSAGE OF GROUNDBREAKING STATE LEGISLATION TO PERMIT CERTAIN HOMELESS AND RUNAWAY MINOR YOUTH THE RIGHT TO CONSENT TO THEIR OWN HEALTH CARE

ALBANY, NY — Today, legislation, sponsored by Assemblymember Gottfried (A.9604) and Senator Brisport (S.8937), passed the Assembly, after passing in the Senate last week with bipartisan support. Once signed into law this groundbreaking legislation will allow homeless and runaway youth, as well as youth who receive services at an approved runaway and homeless youth crisis service program or a transitional independent living support program, to consent to their own health care, including gender affirming care, which is something that has been a longstanding need across the state.

Even if they haven't turned 18, all people deserve access to health care when they need it. Timely treatment and preventative care are critical for young people's health and wellbeing and enable them to excel in school and beyond. For too long, homeless and runaway youth have been unable to access any health care in New York unless or until their situation becomes critical, because they do not have parents available to consent to care for them, and because homeless and runaway youth service providers are not legal guardians and cannot consent for their care.

In response, the bill sponsors, coalitions, community-based organizations, and advocates celebrated passage and urged Governor Hochul to sign this bill immediately with the following statements:

"Young people who are homeless or who have run away from home, and need health care, should not have to rely on their parents to get the care they need," **said Assembly Health Committee Chair and bill sponsor Richard Gottfried.** "Sadly, too often the parents at home are the cause of the problem and are unwilling to consent to needed care for the young person. The bill would only apply if the young person has the mental capacity to understand and

consent. That is also true for adults. Governor Hochul had proposed similar language as part of the state budget. I urge her to sign this important bill into law."

"Our existing laws often disregard the lived realities of marginalized people. Many children, especially LGBTQ+ youth, do not have safe homes and loving families. Denying those kids access to basic health care compounds the already significant harms they face. As both a gay person of color, and as the Chair of the Children & Families Committee, I'm very proud of this legislation," said **Senate Children & Families Committee Chair and bill sponsor Jabari Brisport**.

"Today is a good day for runaway and homeless youth (RHY) in New York State. Once signed into law, this groundbreaking legislation will give RHY the ability to make decisions about their own health care. At a time when numerous states are passing anti-trans legislation or trying to limit the autonomy people have over their own bodies, this legislative act is truly something to celebrate," said **Jamie Powlovich, Executive Director of the Coalition for Homeless Youth**. "We are extremely thankful to Assemblymember Gottfried and Senator Brisport for their leadership on this issue. We will continue to fight for a New York where no young person will be without a stable, loving place to live, and are proud to have been a part of this interim step to support this essential need of RHY."

"Homeless and runaway youth are some of the most vulnerable populations in New York. We are grateful that the legislature passed A.9604/S.8937 to reduce the burdens on this population by ensuring that these young people are able to access medical care when they need it and before their conditions become life threatening. Timely treatment and preventative care are critical for young people's health, and this important legislation reduces barriers to care and empowers youth to get medical treatment when they need it. We urge the Governor to sign the bill immediately," said **Allie Bohm, Policy Counsel at the New York Civil Liberties Union**.

"For decades The Legal Aid Society has advocated for all New Yorkers, including children and young adults, to have access to safe and affirming healthcare," stated **Heidi Bramson, Staff Attorney in the Health Law Unit at The Legal Aid Society**. "This critical legislation fills a legal gap that prevents some young people from consenting to their own healthcare when their life circumstances prevent parents or guardians from doing so on their behalf. We applaud Senate and Assembly leadership for supporting this life-saving piece of legislation and encourage Governor Hochul to sign the bill expeditiously."

"It should go without saying that young people experiencing homelessness deserve health care too. This is especially true for youth who have run away from unsafe environments, including those that are hostile to their LGBTQ identities," said **Jayne Bigelson, Vice President of Advocacy at Covenant House New York**. "All of us at Covenant House New York, including our dedicated doctors and nurses, applaud the NYS legislature for the passage of this legislation. We look forward to the day our health center will no longer face the heartbreaking situation of having to turn away youth under 18 needing care solely because they don't have a guardian to consent for them."

“The passing of this legislation is a life saving measure for all of the transgender and non binary (TGNC) runaway and homeless youth (RHY) in New York State. TGNC youth are experiencing consistent attacks on their autonomy and dignity as people in the US but today NY State has helped them to thrive. Thank you Assembly Member Gottfried and Senator Brisport for championing this bill and allowing LGBTQ+ RHY the ability to heal from the trauma of family rejection.” **Nadia Swanson, Director of Technical Assistance at The Ali Forney Center.**

“The importance of this legislation, specifically for LGBTQ adolescents who are over represented among RHY, cannot be overstated. Care for this vulnerable population has long been limited to sexual and reproductive health, areas of healthcare for which all minors can consent. We will now be able to offer them the whole gamut of preventive and therapeutic health services that all youth need to thrive. Callen-Lorde is eternally grateful to Assembly Member Richard Gottfried and Senator Jabari Brisport for championing this important bill,” said **Uri Belkind, MD Associate Director for Adolescent Medicine at the Callen-Lorde Community Health Center.**

“Gender-affirming healthcare is a life-saving treatment. (A.9604/S.8937) will ensure the right of young TGNC New Yorkers to access gender-affirming healthcare, improving their mental and physical health outcomes. When the lives and rights of TGNC youth are under cruel attack in many parts of the country, New York State is again showing that alternative, compassionate routes are possible,” said **Vladimir Tlali, Director of The New York State LGBT Health and Human Services Network.** “As a Network of 62 organizations providing services to the LGBTQ+ communities of the State, we congratulate the New York State legislature for the passing of this bill, particularly Senator Jabari Brisport and AM Richard Gottfried, for their leadership.”