



**NEW YORK CITY DEPARTMENT OF
HEALTH AND MENTAL HYGIENE**
Michelle Morse, MD, MPH
Acting Health Commissioner

Testimony

of

Jamie Neckles
Assistant Commissioner, Bureau of Mental Health
New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene

before the

New York City Council

Committee on Mental Health, Disabilities and Addiction

On

Int. 986-2024, Int. 989-2024, Int. 996-2024, Int. 1103-2024

November 25, 2024
Committee Room – City Hall
New York, NY

Good morning, Chair Lee and members of the Committee. I am Jamie Neckles, Assistant Commissioner for the Bureau of Mental Health at the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (the Health Department). Thank you for the opportunity to testify today on Introduction 1103 of 2024 – proposed legislation regarding outreach following violent and traumatic events.

The Health Department has concerns regarding this legislation. We understand that violent and traumatic events take a serious emotional and physical toll on individuals and communities. The Health Department supports a wide array of mental health services – 988, mobile crisis teams, youth mental health services in schools, Teenspace, and much more. The Health Department is constantly working behind the scenes to better understand community needs and tailor our response system.

Introduction 1103 was introduced on November 13th. We have reviewed the legislation but have had little time to discuss with our agency partners.

Generally, we have concerns about implementing a one-size fits all response to traumatic events. Each person and situation is unique. We recommend an approach that offers choice and control to the person who experienced the trauma. This could be done through 988 NYC palm card that encourages New Yorkers to call, text or chat with NYC 988 counselors or peers if they need someone to talk to following a traumatic event. NYC 988 is available via talk, text and chat any time of day, every day of the year. 988 counselors and peer support specialists are trained to listen, provide emotional support and help to identify the next best step for each unique situation.

For many people, confidential, telephonic support feels safe, and is a convenient way to cope with their distress. They can talk, text or chat as long as they want and reach back out as needed, whenever they want. In discussion with a 988 counselor, the person can be connected to the full array of mental health services available in our City. Some people may benefit from in-person de-escalation by a mobile crisis team that can respond within a few hours citywide. Still others may prefer a referral to a support group or mental health clinic in their neighborhood. Every situation is unique, people have different preferences so we provide options.

The Health Department is deeply committed to supporting the mental health of New Yorkers. We recommend a person-centered, trauma informed approach to mental health care that offers people choices. The most effective way to do that is to encourage people to contact a NYC 988 counselor or peer when they want to and how they want to. In conversation with NYC 988, they can share their story, be heard, learn coping skills and be connected to the services that meet their needs and preferences.