

Dear Presiding Officer Kevin J. McCaffrey,

it is nice to meet you! My name is Kenu Howard. I am a student in Nyack University's bachelor's in social work program. I am also a Long Island native. I currently reside in the town of Patchogue, having graduated from Bellport High School in 2010. Long Island is a wonderful place to live! I want to first thank you for all the initiatives that you and your counterparts have made to ensure that Long Island remains as beautiful as it is. Thank you! As a social work student, my primary goal is to become a Licensed Clinical Social worker. This is due to the fact that I value mental health. I see the damages that poor mental health can have on individuals and their families. I grew up in a household in which my parents did foster care. I, myself, am adopted. Being as this is the case, I witnessed first hand the impact of poor mental health. Majority of the children that we took in were the products of neglectful parents who struggled mentally. A lot of the children that my parents took in, unfortunately, inherited many mental health issues as a result. With as gorgeous, diverse, and progressive as Long Island is, it is hard to find affordable mental health support. I am writing this letter to you to propose affordable mental health help on the Island. For example, maybe local licensed clinical social workers and psychologists could bring their resources together and host open houses at the YMCA. The open houses could consist of seminars in which community members get educated on mental health. These open houses could also inform community members of what therapy is and why it could be beneficial. I think this would be great because it allows the community to become familiar with the local mental health support. It also opens up a safe space for people to ask questions without being judged. Community members could also become educated on what resources are out there. Some people may not pursue mental health help in fear of prescriptions that may come with any possible diagnosis. Because of that, I think it would be great to involve those who

specialize in holistic healing! They could educate the community on holistic forms of treatments such as vitamins, mood uplifting foods and the benefits of healthy lifestyle choices. For this seminar, I think it would be good to offer a spotlight to families who lost a loved one to mental health issues such as depression. They could share real stories from real experiences. I personally know of three people on Long Island who have chosen to end their lives due to the internal pain they felt. Two of those victims, unfortunately, left behind their beautiful children. I understand that all things cost money, but I was thinking that maybe fund raisers could help raise money for this seminar. It would also be great if local businesses could help sponsor our mission and cater the event. They could even donate helpful things like books about mental health, vitamins and t-shirts that bring awareness to mental health. I know that my idea is broad, but I'd love to hear more about what you think! I appreciate you taking the time out to read this letter. Again, I appreciate everything you and the other government officials are doing to keep this Island amazing. I look forward to hearing from you soon!

Best,

Kenu Howard