



# ACTION ALERT

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A non-profit tax-exempt organization representing New York City's community-based mental health sector.

July 7, 1999

## $\frac{2}{3}$ of the Way to $\frac{1}{2}$ Fare Fairness

After ten years of work and months of intensive lobbying the MTA  $\frac{1}{2}$  Fare Fairness Bill is only one step away from becoming law. On June 30 the New York State Assembly overwhelmingly (128-3) passed the bill (A.1807) that would extend the MTA's half fare rate to SSI recipients who have mental illnesses. For over a decade the MTA has unfairly refused to provide this benefit even though SSD recipients with identical mental illnesses and SSI recipients with physical disabilities or developmental disabilities get the half fare. The Senate passed the bill unanimously (99-0) on June 17<sup>th</sup>. All that remains is for the Governor to sign the bill into law.

### Action Requested:

Write/Fax/Call/Email the Governor's office to register your support for this important piece of legislation. Also contact the offices of key legislators who moved this bill through their houses to let them know how much their efforts on behalf of people with mental illness are appreciated. Assembly Mental Hygiene Committee Chair James Brennan (Brooklyn) and Senator Frank Padavan (Queens) were tireless in their efforts to move these bills and should be commended for their efforts.

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New York State Senate  
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Hon. James F. Brennan  
Chair of Mental Health Committee  
NY State Assembly  
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Hon. George E. Pataki  
Governor  
State of New York  
Executive Chamber  
State Capitol  
Albany, NY 12224  
(518) 474-8343  
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gov.pataki@chamber.state.ny.us

*Sample letter attached*

July 7, 1999

Hon. George E. Pataki  
Governor  
State of New York  
Executive Chamber  
State Capitol  
Albany, NY 12224

Dear Governor Pataki:

Please sign the MTA Half Fare Fairness Bills.

With your pen, you can end a decade-long pattern of discrimination, and make the MTA's Half Fare Disability Program available to SSI recipients with serious and persistent mental illness.

Passed by overwhelming majorities in both the Assembly and Senate, they are supported by a Coalition of more than 220,000 mental health consumers, family members and mental health provider groups.

SSI recipients with serious and persistent mental illness are barred from the Half Fare. SSD recipients, with identical mental illnesses and SSI recipients with physical disabilities or developmental disabilities get the Half Fare. In other parts of the State, this discrimination was long-ago recognized and corrected; unfortunately, not in the 12 Counties served by the MTA.

The MTA Half Fare Fairness Bills will enable SSI recipients with serious and persistent mental illness to travel to, and attend more regularly, their mental health community based rehabilitation programs - to move forward with their rehabilitation - to travel to part time jobs - to travel to school - to better manage the side effects and physical illnesses associated with their mental illnesses.

The MTA Half Fare Fairness Bills will bring the MTA's Half Fare Program into compliance with existing New York State Human Rights Law that prohibits discrimination based on type of disability.

The MTA Half Fare Fairness Bills will have no impact on the MTA's fiscal year ended as of 12/31/99, since following passage, it will take a considerable amount of time to implement and widely distribute the new requirements throughout the mental health community. No deluge of applications will occur.

These bills represent the merger of good transportation and good public health policy. Please sign the MTA Half Fare Fairness Bills.

Respectfully,