Dear Governor Cuomo:

As a member of the New York State Correctional Officers & Police Benevolent Association, I am writing to strongly encourage you to sign into law the OMH Assault Reporting legislation (A9620-A **Paulin/** S6916-C **Ortt)** that is currently awaiting action on your desk.

**This legislation would amend section 7.09 of the Mental Hygiene law by adding a new subdivision (k). This legislation would require the Commissioner of the Office of Mental Health to develop clear and detailed definitions of at least four categories of types of injuries that a staff member, or person confined, may experience as the result of an assault by, or an altercation between, a person confined and any staff member or other person confined in state forensic psychiatric centers. Further, this legislation would require that the commissioner shall report to the legislature on the number of types of injuries within the detailed categories on at least a quarterly basis beginning in January of each year.**

Currently, New York State operates four forensic facilities which house some of the most dangerous and violent individuals in the state. Many of the “patients” confined within the state’s forensic psychiatric institutions are either inmates from state and local correctional facilities or are individuals who have committed violent felony offenses. The unpredictable behavior and violence that these individuals have displayed has resulted in an unprecedented increase in the number of assaults not only on the employees of the facilities, but also on the “patients” who are confined in these institutions.

A few years ago you signed into law similar legislation that requires DOCCS to report on the varying degree in which assaults occur in the prison system. Unfortunately, the NYSCOPBA members employed in the forensic psychiatric institutions are not afforded the same consideration even though they are subjected to extremely dangerous and volatile working conditions and are, at times, at an even greater risk of being assaulted than correctional employees. OMH does not release any data related to the number of violent incidents which occur in these facilities and therefore it is extremely difficult to ascertain the extent of the problem. This legislation simply seeks to require OMH to create unique categories of incidents of assaults and to transparently and accurately report this information to the legislature.

I respectfully urge you to sign this legislation into law.

Respectfully submitted,