



## Mental Health Association in New York State, Inc.

Glenn Liebman, MA  
CEO

William T. Gettman, Jr., MPA  
Board Chair

Dear Governor Hochul:

We are writing to you as members of the New York State Behavioral Health Advisory Council regarding recommendations for the SFY 2022-2023 state budget. The Behavioral Health Advisory Council membership includes service providers, people who have or are currently receiving services, their family members and advocates. Many of the members are individuals, parents or relatives of individuals, who are receiving or have received services from programs under the aegis of the New York State Office of Mental Health (NYSOMH) or the New York State Office of Addiction Services and Supports (OASAS). We are hopeful our recommendations are contained in the Executive Budget Proposal delivered in January.

First however, we want to extend our deep thanks and appreciation for your leadership and public service during one of the most challenging times facing our state. Your focus on supporting the delivery of safe and appropriate services to the most vulnerable children, youth and adults in the human services sector during these uncharted times is remarkable.

During the pandemic, New York State human services workers stayed on the job, provided great service, and cared for the most vulnerable. Due to both a robust and highly competitive economy that has increased private sector wages and insufficient reimbursement rates, nonprofits are now unable to attract and retain the quality staff that our vulnerable citizens deserve.

Now, we see a steady stream of workers leaving or not even applying for community-based human services jobs. The result is many jobs are going unfilled, leading to a staffing shortage that has reached emergency levels. The human services sector depends on trained staff to support our clients. We can't replace staff with technology nor can we raise our prices.

The low pay in the human services field is a major factor in the workforce crunch. Human services workers -most of whom are paid through contracts or rates established by andwith the state government - represent 20 percent of our state's workforce and deliver services to more than 2.5 million New Yorkers. Nearly 80 percent of human services workers are women and more than half are people of color.

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### HEALTHY MINDS FOR A HEALTHY NEW YORK

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Yet compared to our peers in the private sector, nonprofit human services workers are dramatically underpaid: while the average New Yorker earns \$67,500 annually, the average human services worker in New York earns only \$27,800. Many workers in the sector are forced to rely on the same public assistance programs as the clients they serve or a second or third job.

Nearly every sector in the state is experiencing labor shortages. But in these mainly nonprofit human services jobs, the effects are far-reaching. Workers are pulling double shifts to make up for staffing shortages. And with so many jobs going unfilled, vulnerable populations aren't always able to get the vital services they need.

If these conditions were not crisis level by themselves for the sector, we are also faced with inflation and supply chain impacts fueling large increases in basic supplies and operational supports. Some examples include 14% increases in food, 42% increase in fuel and major insurance cost increases.

### **Recommendation**

Though promised an annual statutory Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) more than a decade ago by state lawmakers, the adjustment has been manually removed from the state spending package 9 out of the past 11 years. The state budget is the vehicle to meet the intent and requirements of the legislation.

We urge you to include the 5.4% CPI factor in your budget submission.

The strength of the state's nonprofit partners has always been the mission-driven, resilient, and caring response to need. Together, NYS's health and human services agencies and nonprofits have fought through economic challenges in the past. We believe with prudent and necessary investments in the FY 2022-2023 state budget, gains can be made in behalf of all New Yorkers.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Glenn Liebman, CEO Mental Health Association in New York State (MHANYS)  
Chair, Behavioral Health Advisory Council

Patrice Wallace-Moore , Co- Chair, Behavioral Health Advisory Council; CEO/Executive Director at Arms Acres, Inc.

Katherine G. Alonge-Coons, Rensselaer County Mental Health Commissioner;  
Diane Blohm, Program Director at Mohawk Opportunities ACT Team;  
Donna Mae DePola, President & CEO at Elev8 & Urban Recovery;  
Hilda Rosario Escher, Former President & CEO at Ibero American Action League;

Kathy Gardini, Program Manager at Episcopal Health Services, Inc.;

Brianna Gower, Director of the Young Leaders & Advocates Network;

Carlee Hulsizer, Former Youth Recovery Program Specialist at Friends of Recovery;

John Kastan MD, Chief Strategy & Innovation Officer at Jewish Board;

William LeCates MD, President at Bassett Medical Center;

Roxanne Lewin MD, Medical Director, Beacon Health Options;

Sabina Lim MD, System VP Behavioral Health Safety & Quality, System Medical Director, Regulatory & Gov't Affairs at Mount Sinai Health System;

Michael Martin, Executive Director at Native American Community Services of Erie & Niagara Counties, Inc.;

Chacku Mathai, SAMHSA Project Director at Center for Practice Innovations at Columbia University;

Warren Ng MD, Medical Director of Outpatient Behavioral Health at Columbia University Irving Medical Center;

Michael Orth, Commissioner at Westchester County Department of Community Mental Health;

Debra Pantin, President, CEO at Outreach Development Corp.;

Hon. Robert Russell, Associate Judge for Buffalo City Court;

Susan Salomone, Founder, Drug Crisis in our Backyard

Patrick Seche, Senior Director of Addiction Services for the University of Rochester Medical Center;

Ian Shaffer MD, President of Behavioral Health Management Solutions PLLC;

Kerry Whelan-Megley, Executive Director at Family Ties of Westchester, Inc;

Constance Wille, Chief Executive Officer of Champlain Valley Family Center;

David Woodlock, Former President & CEO of the Institute for Community Living

Cc: Robert Mujica, Division of the Budget  
Ann Sullivan, M.D., Office of Mental Health  
Chinazo Cunningham, MD, Office of Addiction Services and Supports  
Jihoon Kim, Executive Chamber  
Peggy O'Shea, Chief Budget Examiner