



For Immediate Release
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 February 5, 2024

MEDIA ADVISORY

Behavioral Health Advocates Rally for Increase in COLA and Further Investment *Statewide Advocates Asking for 3.2% Increase in Cost-of-Living Adjustment and Investments in Mental Health and Substance Use Disorder Services and Supports*

(Albany, N.Y.) – (Albany, N.Y.) – Twelve statewide advocacy groups hosted a rally in Albany to call on legislators and the Governor **to include an 3.2 % increase in the Cost-of-Living Adjustment (COLA) tied to the CPI-U in July 2023 and \$500 million in needed investments for mental health and substance use disorder services in the 2024-2025 final State Fiscal Year’s budget.**

The rally will be held in Albany on Monday, February 5th at the NYS Capitol Building, between the LCA and Senate.

The group shared their data and concerns [here](#).

Governor Hochul’s budget proposal included a 1.5% COLA, and advocates say this is not enough. **The COLA is not just about staff salaries.** It must also address ever increasing costs associated with operating programs and services, such as gas, food, utilities, insurance, etc. Like all households and businesses across the state and the country, agencies are continuing to do more with less, as current economic conditions have inflated the real costs associated with retaining staff and paying bills.

Agencies that provide services to the most vulnerable adults, children and families with mental health and substance use disorder need, must remain competitive with larger corporations who can pay well over minimum wage. A 3.2% COLA and \$500 million in additional investments are necessary to assist in leveling the playing field and securing a stronger workforce.

WHO: Glenn Liebman, CEO, Mental Health Association in New York State (MHANYS)
 Assemblymember Aileen Gunther
 Senator Samra Brouck (invited)
 Assemblymember Phil Steck (invited)
 Senator Nathalia Fernandez (invited)
 Cohen Miles-Rath, Peer, MHANYS
 William T. (Bill) Gettman, CEO, Northern Rivers, and Board Member, NYS Coalition for Children’s Behavioral Health
 Sebrina Barrett, Executive Director, Association for Community Living

Kathryn Fletcher, CEO, Equinox
Christine Rodriguez, Chief Program Officer, Equinox
Paige Pierce, CEO, Families Together in NYS (FTNYS)
Kim Kaiser, Director of DEI, FTNYS
Harvey Rosenthal, CEO, The Alliance for Rights and Recovery
Sean Miranda, Peer Specialist, Intensive and Sustained Engagement Team (INSET),
Mental Health Association of Westchester
Matthew Shapiro, Director of Policy and Family Member, NAMI
Shadey Mercado-Perez, Peer, NAMI

WHAT: Rally to call for 3.2 % COLA increase and \$500 million investment in mental health and substance use disorder services

WHERE: NYS Capitol, Senate Staircase, 3rd Floor, (down the hall from LCA)

WHEN: **Monday, February 5, 2024 at 10:00 a.m.**

The twelve agencies represented at the rally are: [Association for Community Living](#), [Coalition of Medication-Assisted Treatment Providers and Advocates of New York State](#) (COMPA), [Families Together in New York State](#), [Mental Health Association in New York State](#), [National Alliance on Mental Illness New York State](#) (NAMI), [New York Association of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Providers/InUnity Alliance](#), [New York State Care Management Coalition](#), [New York State Coalition for Children's Behavioral Health](#), [NYS Council for Community Behavioral Health Care](#), [Alliance for Rights and Recovery \(formerly NYAPRS\)](#), [Supportive Housing Network of New York](#), and [The Coalition for Behavioral Health/InUnity Alliance](#).

