



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**Contact: Susan Bardack  
518.867.7940  
susan@buzzmediasolutions.com**

### **Hochul State of the State Needs Clarity on Mental Health and Addiction Services 5.4% COLA; No Mention of \$500 million for Behavioral Health Workforce, Service and Support**

Advocates for New York's adults, children, and families with ever growing mental health and addiction related needs, and the service providers who support them across our state, are encouraged by Governor Hochul's State of the State that included a \$500 million Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) for human services workers and \$2 billion to support mental health and substance use disorder care and mental hygiene worker retention bonuses. However, it was not clear if the behavioral health sector is included in the mentioned COLA funding or the \$2 billion to support healthcare worker wages. The commitment is welcome, however advocates want to make certain that mental health and addiction services are included in these investments. Concern also continues for advocates as they were clear that in addition to a 5.4% COLA, the system needs \$500 million for their workforce, service, and support.

Mental health and addiction services are designed to be a safety net but have been largely neglected for more than a decade, leaving the industry struggling to keep the doors open. The pandemic has only exacerbated these problems. More than 40% of residents in New York have reported that COVID has resulted in increased mental health and substance use disorder issues and that includes many of the workers in the behavioral health setting. Additionally, the CDC recently announced that the opioid epidemic worsened significantly during the pandemic, with overdose deaths up 28.5% from the year before, and the Surgeon General put out a public health advisory on the mental health challenges confronting our youth. According to the advisory, symptoms of depression and anxiety have doubled during the pandemic. This has resulted in a 51% increase of attempted suicide in adolescent girls and a 4% increase rate for adolescent boys.

The 11 statewide organizations are calling for a 5.4% COLA for mental health and addiction services and \$500 million for mental health and addiction workforce, service, and support to be included in the Executive's 2022-23 proposed budget. Governor Hochul's first State of the State has potential to address some of our long standing concerns but the devil is in the detail. The State Budget will hopefully provide the funding, support and service that the behavioral health sector so desperately needs.

For more information, or to interview a representative from an advocate organization, please contact Susan Bardack at [susan@buzzmediasolutions.com](mailto:susan@buzzmediasolutions.com) or 518.867.7940.

###

### **About Behavioral Health Advocates**

Behavioral Health Advocates is a group of 11 organizations that have come together to achieve common goals within the Behavioral Health industry. BHA came together about a year ago, as an ad hoc coalition, and they represent providers, adults, children, and families throughout New York state.

The 11 organizations that comprise BHA are:

- Association for Community Living
- Coalition of Medication-Assisted Treatment Providers and Advocates of New York State
- 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, Inc. (ASAP)
- New York State Care Management Coalition
- New York State Council for Community Behavioral Health Care
- New York Association of Psychiatric Rehabilitation Services
- Supportive Housing Network of New York
- The Coalition for Behavioral Health