

March 28, 2025



The Honorable Andrea Stewart-Cousins
Majority Leader, New York State Senate
Legislative Office Building, Room 907
Albany, NY 12247



The Honorable Carl E. Heastie
Speaker, New York State Assembly
Legislative Office Building, Room 932
Albany, NY 12248



Dear Majority Leader Stewart-Cousins and Speaker Heastie,



We are leaders from communities across New York State. And while our populations may be smaller than New York City's, we similarly contend with issues relating to mental health that transcend geography. We all owe our residents expansive and effective mental health services that prioritize communal wellbeing and safety.



Every day, we and our neighbors walk the streets in our communities, patronize businesses, go to the doctor, or go out to dinner. And we all share the experience of having encountered members of our communities in various states of mental or physical distress who clearly need help. These may be individuals who have been disconnected from services or for whom traditional access to services and care just hasn't worked. These are people who have real unmet needs - like food and necessary healthcare and for whom the streets are not safe. These are people whose mental illness is the very thing preventing them from getting the help they need. Often, we may individually or collectively feel at a loss about how best to help people get on a pathway towards recovery and self-sufficiency.



Solutions to the challenges we face require deep investment, a holistic strategy, and continual commitment – all of which Governor Hochul has delivered. Since taking office in 2021, Governor Hochul has invested more than \$1 billion into the behavioral healthcare system to support outpatient clinics, peer services, intensive wrap-around services and supportive housing – all so people who need help can get it. And so that people can achieve a sustained recovery with lifelong support in place.



As a result, cities like ours have seen increases in available inpatient psychiatric beds and the community-based services needed to support people in their communities. We applaud the Governor for taking on the hard fights to ensure that insurers are actually covering mental health services, paying adequate rates and that needed psychiatric beds have been brought back online.



Despite her dogged efforts, there remain people with untreated mental health conditions who by virtue of their own mental illness cannot access





VILLAGE OF FREDONIA, NY

THE INCORPORATED VILLAGE OF
FREEMPORT
NEW YORK



The City of
Kingston, NY



the medical and mental health care that they so desperately need. People whose health and safety are in jeopardy because their mental illness is preventing them from accessing care - people who risk amputation because their mental illness doesn't let them see a provider to treat their diabetes, people who risk heat stroke because they are overdressing in the height of summer, and people who may be unintentionally posing a danger to themselves or members of the larger community. As New Yorkers, we want to help our fellow community members receive care and treatment with dignity and compassion.

We support the meaningful, but sensitive changes that the Governor is proposing to strengthen our ability to deliver help to those that need it most. As part of Governor Hochul's proposed mental health reforms, the law would be updated to make it clearer that someone can be evaluated for involuntary commitment when their mental illness renders them clearly incapable of providing for their own essential needs to the extent that it puts them at risk of serious physical harm. This would provide a pathway for clinicians to help ensure people get the care they need, when they need it and don't have to wait for a serious incident to happen. The changes she has proposed would also require hospitals to take a more comprehensive and collaborative approach when people are brought in for evaluation and would allow, in certain circumstances, for Psychiatric Nurse Practitioners to participate in the commitment process.

As elected officials who hear from a variety of constituents, we think these are commonsense changes that will help people get the behavioral healthcare they need, when they need it. We applaud Governor Hochul for having the courage to propose these changes and we urge the Legislature to support these changes to the law that would enable our communities to better care for those in need.

Sincerely,

Jason Garnar
Broome County Executive

Christopher Scanlon
Mayor, City of Buffalo

Adam Bello
Monroe County Executive

Malik Evans
Mayor, City of Rochester

Kathy Sheehan
Mayor, City of Albany

Ben Walsh
Mayor, City of Syracuse



Mike Spano
Mayor, City of Yonkers

Lee Kyriacou
Mayor, City of Beacon



Dennis Siry
Mayor, Village of Amityville
President, Suffolk County Village
Officials Association

Margay Blackman
Mayor, Village of Brockport



Rich Schaffer
Supervisor, Town of Babylon
Chair, Suffolk County Supervisors
Association

Kathee Burke-Gonzalez
Supervisor, Town of East Hampton



Julie Domaratz
Mayor, Village of Fairport



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Deputy Supervisor, Town of Babylon

Ralph Ekstrand
Mayor, Village of Farmingdale



DuWayne Gregory
Councilperson, Town of Babylon

Mike Ferguson
Mayor, Village of Fredonia



Anthony M. Manetta
Councilperson, Town of Babylon

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Raymond King
Mayor, Village of Silver Springs

Robert Restaino
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Edward R. Wehrheim
Supervisor, Town of Smithtown

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Supervisor, Town of Southold

