



New York Association of Psychiatric Rehabilitation Services, Inc.

Harvey Rosenthal
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Senator Chuck Schumer
322 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

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Dear Senator Schumer,

I am writing as CEO of the New York Association of Psychiatric Rehabilitation Services, a grassroots organization that represents thousands of New Yorkers with major mental health, addiction and trauma related needs and the community mental health providers who serve them across our state.

Since 1981, we have been dedicated to the improvement of services, social conditions and public policies that advance the recovery, rehabilitation, rights and full community inclusion of our members.

We have long appreciated your substantial record of strong leadership on behalf of the disability community here in New York and nationally.

As we are in the midst of one of the greatest challenges to the mental health of both our community and to all Americans, we look once again to your leadership to not only protect but to expand services and supports at a time when they are needed the most.

Should Congress deny sufficient COVID-19 emergency funding to the states and localities in the relief package that is currently under consideration, the impact of resultant state and local cuts will devastate community mental health service systems across New York and nationally.

Here in New York, Governor Cuomo has projected the need to cut \$8 billion in local services across the state if federal relief is not forthcoming. Accordingly, state and local officials have already notified community providers in late May to be prepared for an imminent 20% cut across the board cut to the public funds they rely on to provide basic services and supports to New Yorkers in need every day.

A brief polling of a number of NYAPRS member agencies from across the state gives only a partial look of the impact of these disastrous cuts, projecting significant reductions if not the elimination of both virtual and face to face services of the following kind:

Westchester-Putnam: support services for at risk children and families, veterans' services, drop-in, and crisis management centers, sex offender

treatment, hunger action services, intensive mobile treatment team and homeless shelter support services.

Hudson Valley: crisis respite, child advocacy programs, rape crisis services, transportation, education, closure of some supported housing beds and elimination of specialized services for those with both mental health and substance use related conditions.

Central New York: crisis and homeless diversion programs and mental health/substance use relapse prevention services

Southern Tier: mobile crisis team, short-term crisis respite center and essential peer to peer supports

Long Island: a COVID crisis help line, crisis and hospital diversion services, peer to peer support, homeless outreach including a mobile shower unit, tele-health and case management supports

New York City: intensive mobile treatment teams, homeless outreach, rape and domestic abuse services, prison/jail diversion services and rehabilitation, wellness and crisis respite centers

Western New York: community housing with supports, crisis hot lines, rehabilitation and drop-in centers, peer recovery guides and transportation

North Country: staff layoffs that will shrink mobile crisis, hospital and jail diversion services.

Here are some direct comments from community mental health agency leaders:

"With cuts of this magnitude, we'll no longer be able to effectively assist hundreds of people who call on us every day due to behavioral health crises, hunger, homelessness and sexual assault. We must not jeopardize the jobs of skilled, compassionate and dedicated front-line staff who are unequivocally saving lives every day."

"The COVID crisis will only intensify the need for mental health, substance use and suicide prevention programs and social services like housing, employment, homeless and eviction prevention services in the coming months if not years. This is a time to expand not cut critically needed services of this kind."

"A cut this size would literally compromise the future existence of our agency. At a time when mental health services and support are at a record high, we need additional funds to meet the needs, not be placed in a position of fiscal insolvency."

'Our staff has been so resilient and creative in the midst of the COVID crisis to ensure we could provide all of our services remotely for people who need them, and I'll get to repay them with pink slips.'

"At a time in history when there is widespread agreement that the emotional toll across society will be profound and the emerging evidence that the poor and those with disabilities bear the heaviest burden, reducing our commitment to behavioral health is simply irresponsible."

Further, we must candidly confront the broader societal mental health crisis that looms ahead, the one that experts are calling a "shadow pandemic" of emotional pain and trauma that will be with us for years to come.

We'll long be confronting the impact of months of nerve-wracking uncertainty and panic about where the virus has gone and who it has infected if not taken as well as the deep sense of grief and loss of those have lost parents, sibling and children and the impact of months of isolation and trauma.

Add to that the shock and despair of those who have experienced the overnight loss of jobs and of paychecks to meet basic needs and the steady increases we are already seeing in incidents of suicides, relapses and overdoses and domestic violence.

In recent months, too many suffered and far too many died because the help wasn't there when they needed it the most whether it be ventilators, PPE, testing and access to treatment.

So many more will suffer and be lost because critically needed mental health treatment and support and the staff to offer them won't be there.

Once again, we look to your great leadership on behalf of all American with current and emerging mental health needs to ensure that the next package of COVID-19 relief provides sufficient funding to the states and localities to protect and expand critically needed behavioral health and trauma related services and supports at a time when they have never been more needed.

Please feel free to contact me at harveyr@nyaprs.org or at 518-527-0564 if there is any way I can support your efforts in this regard.

Thank you,



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