



NEW Coalition Launches "Bring It Home" Campaign Calling On The State To Better Fund Mental Health Housing

Advocates Call for "Better Funding for Better Care", Emphasizing Need for New York to Live Up to Its Reputation as a National Leader and Address Major Health Crisis

Albany, NY – A coalition of mental health advocates and supportive housing providers today launched the "Bring It Home: Better Funding for Better Care" campaign to call on the state to adequately fund community-based mental health housing programs in an effort to pull the housing system away from its impending financial breaking point.

Despite New York's nation-leading 40,000 community-based mental health housing units, the system has been left financially stretched untenably thin by decades of inconsistent and unreliable state funding. New York has a moral obligation to protect this critical system by providing for people with serious psychiatric disabilities – who often have significant medical conditions and substance abuse issues as well.

"A stable home is the foundation of care and recovery for New Yorkers with psychiatric disabilities," said Toni Lasicki, Executive Director of the Association for Community Living (ACL). "It's our responsibility as New Yorkers to help care for our neighbors, and ensuring continuity of care is key to supporting those with serious and persistent psychiatric disabilities. Without reliable, adequate and continuous funding, providers will cease operations, leading to shortages of critical community-based housing units and punishing those who need help the most."

"The Governor and Mayor of NYC have announced commitments to 35,000 new units of supportive housing but if we lose existing housing due to chronic underfunding, we are just moving one step forward and two steps back," said Laura Mascuch, Executive Director of the Supportive Housing Network of New York (The Network).

A failure to adequately fund care for its most vulnerable residents will result in profound consequences – not only for our residents, but for taxpayers as well.

"Without a stable home, our loved ones end up homeless, incarcerated, incapacitated or hospitalized—at immensely higher costs to the state and taxpayers," said Wendy Burch, Executive Director of National Alliance of Mental Illness-New York State (NAMI-NYS). People with psychiatric disabilities who are jailed or imprisoned, often for minor infractions, can cost roughly \$45,000 - \$75,000 annually. Hospitalizations can cost \$300,000 to \$400,000 per year.

In contrast, the community-based mental health housing system serves 40,000 of the state's most vulnerable residents, but funding ranges from just \$7,600 per person to \$25,000, which is both unsustainable and completely insufficient to operate these highly complex and regulated programs.

This population needs providers that can keep up with emerging changes to the system, who can meet the myriad obligations required by the Office of Mental Health, The Justice Center, The Office of Medicaid Inspector, the Department of Health, and local governmental units, maintain a staff of consistent caregivers and provide supports to ensure that recipients are receiving appropriate care, showing up for their appointments and taking medications on schedule.

"Stable housing with supports is essential to the stability, health and recovery of New Yorkers with major mental health conditions," said Harvey Rosenthal, Executive Director of the New York Association of Psychiatric Rehabilitation Services (NYAPRS). "The lack or loss of housing leads to avoidable relapses and crises that simply force individuals back to square one, compromising the hard work and hope necessary to achieve recovery and reintegration into the community."

"Without appropriate funding, we are running the serious risk of allowing the continuum of community mental health housing in our state to collapse," said Glenn Liebman, Chief Executive Officer of the Mental Health Association in New York State (MHANYS).

Under the leadership of Governor Andrew Cuomo, and previously his father Governor Mario Cuomo, New York led the nation in caring for those with serious psychiatric disabilities. Now, the state has an opportunity to show the nation how to address a major health crisis by promoting an approach with stable mental health housing programs that ensure integrated care. Without sustained and increased funding for these crucial programs, New York risks losing its reputation as a national leader and forsaking this population.

About the Coalition: Bring It Home: Better Funding for Better Care

Bring it Home is coalition of community-based supportive housing providers, mental health advocates, consumers and their families, urging New York State to adequately fund community-based housing programs for individuals with psychiatric disabilities. Full recovery and community reintegration depends on stable housing opportunities. Through education and advocacy, Bring it Home is working to bring *better funding for better care* to New York.