



**For Immediate Release**

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## **NEW ADVOCACY GROUP FORMS TO FIGHT FOR NEW YORK'S HUMAN SERVICES SECTOR**

*Human Services Action will increase political power of nonprofit organizations and workforce and emphasize the indispensable role the sector plays in supporting and strengthening communities*

*Following Day Without Human Services with 6,000 workers rallying at City Hall, new nonprofit champion fights for change*

NEW YORK – Today, June 12th, marks the launch of Human Services Action (HSA), the first 501(c)4 advocacy organization dedicated to fighting for the needs of New York's human services sector, and the more than 800,000 people who make up this essential workforce. HSA is mission-driven to reverse the decades of chronic underfunding of the sector, which has left organizations providing lifesaving services to New Yorkers on the brink of collapse and frontline workers earning poverty wages.

The human services sector provides vital services to millions of New Yorkers each year, ensuring communities receive home delivered meals, mental health services, youth and older adult programs, eviction prevention, and more. Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, providers ramped up services to support thousands of community members struggling with everything from food insecurity to social isolation. Despite the fact that the government relies on these organizations to provide most lifesaving social services to New York communities, human services organizations struggle to keep their doors open and their workers fairly paid due to late and insufficient payments from City and State contracts. Human services workers have been fighting for their right to fair pay, and the participation of thousands of these workers in the Human Services Council's Day Without Human Services on May 25th emphasizes the enormous impact these workers have on New York City each day.

Human Services Action is advocating for government to finally provide the support human services nonprofits, their programs, and their workforce need to thrive. The sector, through HSA, will no longer engage in government partnerships mired in inequity and inefficiency. HSA demands City and State officials prioritize equity and justice for New Yorkers through fully funded services, on-time contract payments, and living wages commensurate with the experience and talent of our workforce. HSA's work is needed now more than ever before, as our city's government has once again ignored the human services sector by declining to include a Cost-of-Living Adjustment (COLA) in the Executive Budget released last month. This insufficient funding means that human services workers – most of whom are women and people



of color – will still not be compensated in accordance with the skyrocketing costs of living in New York City. HSA will tirelessly fight for COLAs to be included in all future City and State budgets to ensure the workers taking care of New York communities are compensated with wages that sustain themselves and their families.

Human Services Action will hold government partners accountable on these issues through several actions and engagements, including holding elected officials accountable on how they address these systemic inequities and how they do so.

HSA will focus on:

1. **Equitable wages for human services workers.** Human services workers, most of whom are women and people of color, are extremely underpaid, working in buildings with crumbling infrastructure, and earning wages so low they often must rely on the same benefits and services as their nonprofit clients. The neglect of the human services workforce is especially abhorrent after these essential workers tirelessly supported New York communities throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, working on the frontlines at great risk to themselves and their families.
2. **On Time Payments.** Human services organizations are owed hundreds of millions of dollars by City and State government at any given time, and often wait years to secure a registered contract. Government's acknowledgement of this debilitating problem is not enough. Elected officials must pass legislation and system reforms that hold government agencies accountable for registering and paying on time.
3. **Commitment to quality services.** The system is *designed* to underpay human services, leading to the degradation of services in our communities. The current system for human services organizations applying for contracts is mired with problems and inefficiencies by not involving feedback from those providing and receiving services, omitting important quality metrics, and chronically underfunding programmatic design work. Elected officials must commit to changing the very structure of how human services are procured and set up systems for providers to share feedback with government.

As a 501(c)4, Human Services Action will work collectively to elevate human services issues to voters, elected officials, and candidates in new ways that emphasize the indispensable role the sector and workforce play in all New Yorkers' lives and dismantle the structures that prevent the sector from strengthening communities.

The Board of Human Services Action includes:

- **Maria Lizardo (Board Chair)**, *Northern Manhattan Improvement Corporation*
- **Darren Bloch**, *Greenwich House*
- **Neill Coleman**, *Mission Magnified Consulting*
- **David Condliffe**, *Center for Community Alternatives*
- **Carlyn Cowen**, *Chinese-American Planning Council*



- **Margaret Crotty**, *John Snow, Inc*
- **Julissa Ferreras-Copeland**, *Hollis Public Affairs*
- **Nicole McVinua**, *Urban Pathways*
- **Yesenia Mata**, *La Colmena*
- **Dianne Morales**, *StillRising LLC*
- **Rose Pierre-Louis**, *NYU McSilver Institute*
- **Ronald Richter**, *Jewish Child Care Association*
- **Nancy Wackstein**, *Member at Large*

“The human services sector is chronically underfunded and has been fighting for better pay and better working conditions for its workers for years,” **said Michelle Jackson, Executive Director of the Human Services Council.** “Human services nonprofits continue to take these underpaid, delayed contracts because they know the community needs them. We welcome the creation of the Human Services Action and look forward to the beginning of this new partnership as we work to improve conditions for all human services workers.”

“If human services organizations were to close from lack of staff or funding, all New Yorkers would suffer,” **said Maria Lizardo, Executive Director of the Northern Manhattan Improvement Corporation (NMIC).** “The recent closure of Sheltering Arms, a 200-year-old nonprofit in New York, highlights what can happen when government does not pay for the services it contracted for. The human services sector is in crisis, and the Human Services Action is here to fight for us all.”

“The sector should not participate in a system that perpetuates inequities; we should work to change it,” **said Ronald E. Richter, CEO of JCCA.** “Our government must prioritize the millions of people who participate in our programs. To that end, it is necessary to dramatically reform the nonprofit funding system, and to fund our services in a way that reflects how critical we are. What we have is overly burdensome, and designed to perpetuate what drives people to need our services in the first place. Forming the Human Services Action is a crucial step in advocating for the needs of the sector.”

“Human service providers are the backbone of New York’s communities, providing essential services on behalf of government,” **said Nicole McVinua, Director of Policy at Urban Pathways.** “Despite this, the sector continues to be plagued by underfunded contracts that unjustly impact our workforce and service recipients. Government can, and must, do better. I look forward to new ways of supporting our sector through the efforts of Human Services Action.”

“The fight for equitable wages for human services workers and on-time payments for human services organizations is sadly not new. Workers, nonprofits and funders will continue to make the case for equity and dignity,” **said Neill Coleman, Principal, Mission Magnified Consulting.** “However, the creation of Human Services Action has the potential to be transformative through bringing the tools of direct advocacy and political accountability to this



just cause. Elected officials should take note and commit to overhauling the system for human services to the benefit of New Yorkers in need.”

“HSA will build power of human service workers across New York State to seek a world where everyone has what they need to thrive,” **said David Condliffe, Executive Director of Center for Community Alternatives, Inc.**

“New York’s human services sector is a vital part of the city and state’s fabric. For too long human services employees and organizations bear the burden of not knowing when they’re getting paid, whether their contracts will be renewed in a timely fashion, or if the work required will be covered adequately by the agreement,” **said Rose Pierre-Louis Executive Director of the NYU McSilver Institute for Poverty Policy and Research.** “HSA will push for critical improvements to the government contracting process, so nonprofits and their clients alike will receive the support and care they need to thrive.”

“For far too long, far too many people have been ‘OK’ with city and state government paying community health and human services workers poverty-level wages,” **said Darren Bloch, Executive Director of Greenwich House.** “This critical work is powered in large part by women and people of color; it literally helps keep our neighborhoods safe, supported and functioning; and government actors not fairly paying these workers and the organizations is deliberate and shameful. I’m frustrated that this next step in advocacy work is necessary, but I couldn’t be prouder to be a part of the effort.”