

1 **2025 NYSAC Legislative Conference**  
2 **Standing Committee on Public Health/Mental Health**  
3 **Resolution #3**

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5 **Resolution in Support of the SFY 2026 Executive Budget Proposals to**  
6 **Strengthen New York State's Public Health and Behavioral Health**  
7 **Workforce and Urging Additional State Investment**  
8

9 **WHEREAS**, over the last decade, local health departments (LHDs) and local mental  
10 health departments (LMHDs) have experienced a lack of sustainable state aid assistance  
11 to appropriately support the workforce required for the expansion and implementation  
12 of local services and supports; and

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14 **WHEREAS**, New York State's local public health and behavioral health workforce is  
15 responsible for promoting and protecting the health and wellbeing of New York's  
16 communities in accordance with Article 6 of the Public Health Law and Article 41 of the  
17 Mental Hygiene Law; and

18  
19 **WHEREAS**, more than one in three Americans struggle with mental health and/or  
20 substance use issues; and

21  
22 **WHEREAS**, maintaining a well-trained, adequately staffed public health and  
23 behavioral health workforce is essential for protecting community health, responding to  
24 emergencies, and delivering vital services to New York residents; and

25  
26 **WHEREAS**, research indicates that 90 percent of LHDs in New York State do not have  
27 the minimum number of staff needed to provide core public health services, with an  
28 estimated 1,000 additional full-time staff needed statewide; and

29  
30 **WHEREAS**, these staffing challenges are particularly acute in critical positions, with  
31 vacancy rates of 39.1 percent for licensed practical nurses, 26.0 percent for supervising  
32 public health nurses, and 24.3 percent for community health workers; and

33  
34 **WHEREAS**, stagnant state aid, tax caps, funding eligibility restrictions, and other  
35 administrative barriers all undermine the public health and behavioral health  
36 infrastructure necessary to respond to emergencies and provide essential services; and

37  
38 **WHEREAS**, shortages in fields such as nursing, counseling, and public health  
39 engineering have resulted in longer periods for recruitment to fill vacancies, as well as  
40 competition from the private sector that impacts employee retention; and

41  
42 **WHEREAS**, Local Governmental Units (LGUs) and Directors of Community Services  
43 (DCSs), operating under Article 41 of the NYS Mental Hygiene Law, are responsible for  
44 overseeing vital behavioral health services while facing unprecedented demands for  
45 mental health and substance abuse treatment; and

1 **WHEREAS**, the COVID-19 pandemic severely exacerbated the preexisting workforce  
2 crisis, with droves of nurses, counselors, psychologists, social workers, and direct service  
3 professionals exiting the sector’s workforce or retiring early due to burn out, long hours,  
4 low pay, COVID-19 risks, and workplace stress or moving to private sector jobs with  
5 better pay, benefits, and hours; and  
6

7 **WHEREAS**, rising operational costs in areas such as technology, health insurance,  
8 utilities, and rent add significant burdens on providers to allocate extremely limited  
9 fiscal resources to meet both workforce and operational demands; and  
10

11 **WHEREAS**, the healthcare system is under significant strain, with 29 percent of New  
12 York’s hospitals financially distressed and providers struggling to maintain adequate  
13 staffing levels amid rising demand for inpatient and outpatient treatment, crisis  
14 services, and addiction care; and  
15

16 **WHEREAS**, Governor Hochul's SFY 2025-26 Executive Budget proposal includes  
17 several important initiatives to address these challenges, including:

- 18 • \$694 million for implementation of two workforce programs to support training  
19 and education for new health, behavioral health, and social care workforce  
20 workers, as well as support career advancement for existing workers through  
21 tuition payments and student loan repayment;
- 22 • \$47 million to cover tuition, fees, and books for community college students ages  
23 25-55 pursuing high-demand degrees, including nursing;
- 24 • A Targeted Inflationary Increase (TII) of 2.1 percent for providers of eligible  
25 services and programs under the Office for People With Developmental  
26 Disabilities (OPWDD), Office of Mental Health (OMH), Office of Addiction  
27 Services and Supports (OASAS), Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS),  
28 Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance (OTDA), and the State Office for  
29 the Aging (SOFA);
- 30 • \$16.5 million to enhance county-level implementation of assisted outpatient  
31 treatment programs (AOT); and
- 32 • \$2 million for additional OMH staff to increase reporting and monitoring of AOT  
33 programs, enhance statewide training, and provide additional support for  
34 counties and providers; and  
35

36 **WHEREAS**, these investments represent important steps forward; however, additional  
37 support is needed to build and maintain a robust public health and behavioral health  
38 workforce capable of meeting current and future challenges.  
39

40 **NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED**, that the New York State Association of  
41 Counties (NYSAC) supports Governor Hochul's Executive Budget proposals to  
42 strengthen the public health and behavioral health workforce; and  
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44 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that NYSAC calls for an additional 7.8 percent  
45 increase for mental health and substance use disorder reimbursement rates and  
46 contracts in SFY 2025-26 beyond the proposed 2.1 percent Targeted Inflationary  
47 Increase (TII) to address the severe workforce crisis; and

1 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that comprehensive long-term workforce  
2 development solutions must be implemented, including:

- 3 • Creating clear job pathways beginning in high school;
- 4 • Developing career advancement programs at the community college level;
- 5 • Expanding scholarship opportunities;
- 6 • Implementing easily accessible student loan forgiveness programs; and
- 7 • Reducing administrative burdens on providers; and

8  
9 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that NYSAC urges the elimination of administrative  
10 barriers and funding restrictions that undermine workforce recruitment and retention,  
11 including:

- 12 • Removing the 50 percent fringe rate cap under article 6;
- 13 • Providing flexibility in funding streams to support workforce initiatives; and
- 14 • Modernizing civil service requirements to expedite hiring; and

15  
16 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that NYSAC supports increasing the state aid for  
17 general public health work base grants and behavioral health services to account for  
18 increased costs, expanded responsibilities, and the need to provide competitive  
19 compensation to attract and retain qualified staff.

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21 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that copies of this resolution be sent to the counties  
22 of New York State encouraging member counties to enact similar resolutions; and

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24 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that NYSAC shall forward copies of this resolution to  
25 Governor Kathy Hochul, the New York State Legislature, the Commissioner of the New  
26 York State Department of Health, the Commissioner of the New York State Office of  
27 Mental Health, the Commissioner of the Office of Addiction Services and Supports, and  
28 all others deemed necessary and proper.