COLA STORY

*Background*: In 2006, a law was enacted to provide a statutory COLA for human service providers (Chapter 57 of the Laws of 2006).  The COLA for each year was to be based upon the previous year’s annual Consumer Price Index - Urban (CPI-U). While the original law was initially effective for a three-year period, the law has been extended for every year through this current fiscal year.  However, this does not mean that the COLA was appropriated in each of these years.

**The cumulative annual CPI-U increases, over a 15-year period** from 2007-08 through the current fiscal year 2021-22, **totals 35.31%.**  However, to calculate the cumulative amount of COLA withheld from providers, one needs to recognize that COLAs were provided in two of those 15 years (totaling 1.2%), and in two other years modest salary increases were directed for certain job titles as defined by the CFR.

***Accounting for two small COLA increases that were provided and two modest salary increases, a*conservative estimate of the cumulative amount of COLA withheld from behavioral health providers is approximately 30%.**

Note:  Calculating the total amount of COLA withheld from behavioral health providers, with precision, is extremely difficult for a variety of reasons however the approximate amount of COLA funding deficit for OMH and OASAS providers combined **is well over $500M**