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## **NEW YORK STATE COUNCIL APPLAUDS GOVERNOR HOCHUL FOR STATE OF THE STATE PROPOSALS**

The New York State Council for Community Behavioral Healthcare ("The Council") represents 125 mental health and substance use disorder community-based agencies across New York that provide a broad range of mental health and substance use disorder prevention, treatment, recovery and harm reduction programs and services. The board of directors and members of the NYS Council are profoundly grateful to Governor Hochul for her strong prioritization and laser-like focus on the many unmet needs of New Yorkers living with mental health and/or substance use disorder conditions who all too often fall through cracks and gaps in our continuum of care.

We are particularly grateful to the Governor for highlighting the unmet needs of New York's children and youth and their families who are currently unable to find mental health services. The Governor's proposal to reduce by half the number of school-aged children in need of school-based mental health services is a critical reform that wisely invests in the wellbeing of children and youth who desperately need our support. And the state's decision to significantly expand the number of community-based behavioral health agencies that can participate in an ongoing federal demonstration program, the Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinic Program is critically needed. This successful Program has improved the quality of care for New Yorkers with serious behavioral health conditions while simultaneously saving the state scarce resources in reductions of utilization of more acute levels of care. The Governor's response to NYS Council advocacy to expand this evidence-based model of care is a win-win for all New Yorkers.

We also commend the Governor's call to expand insurance coverage for mental health services and ensure that New Yorkers have real access to needed behavioral health care with new availability and accessibility standards for behavioral health services.

The NYS Council remains optimistic that the executive budget proposal will include a substantial COLA for the mental health and substance use disorder workforce, and the agencies who employ them. The proposed expansion of services to meet the needs of New Yorkers who need care must be met with an accompanying strategy that significantly enhances our ability to recruit and retain the staff we need to meet the challenges ahead.

We look forward to working with Governor Hochul and the State Legislature to make these bold proposals a reality in the final State Budget.