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STATEMENT ON GOVERNOR HOCHUL'S WAIVING OF CIVIL SERVICE EXAM FOR STATE WORKERS (HELP PROGRAM)

The Hochul Administration recently identified a solution (albeit temporary) to address the State's own workforce shortage by waiving civil service exam requirements for certain positions in areas including health and human services. We understand the Executive is searching for ways to improve significant workforce problems. **What we do not understand is why the state has not also addressed the nonprofit sector workforce crisis as well.**

Non-profit community based agencies are the backbone of New York's safety net system. But these agencies are drowning under the weight of workforce shortages that have left them unable to meet state expectations to provide high quality on demand care to New Yorkers in need. Community-based agencies that provide mental health and substance use disorder services have greatly reduced or shut down new intakes due to staggering workforce shortages. Their staff are paid (on average) 1/3 less than similarly situated state workers. And, due to inadequate reimbursement rates, they have little to no ability to pay overtime wages to fill in the gaps.

The undersigned agencies call on the Hochul Administration to quickly convene a task force comprised of system stakeholders to identify immediate solutions to the staffing crisis facing agencies licensed and/or funded under the Office of Mental Health (OMH) and the Office of Addiction Services and Supports (OASAS). The state workforce is clearly not the only sector that is facing a staffing emergency.

If the Hochul Administration can identify solutions to address the state workforce crisis, it can and should do the same for the nonprofit sector. New York State has a legal and moral responsibility to ensure vulnerable adults, children and families have timely access to services in local communities across New York State. It is in the best interests of all New Yorkers (and state finances) for the public mental hygiene system to be functioning at or above capacity in order to provide equitable and timely access to care, services and supports.