



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
March 11, 2024

Contact Lauri Cole, Executive Director
(518) 461-8200

ASSEMBLY AND SENATE ONE-HOUSE BUDGET PROPOSALS INCREASE HUMAN SERVICES COLA BUT WITH A PROBLEMATIC RESTRICTION

In 2006, New York State enacted a statute that authorized an annual Cost-of-Living Adjustment (COLA) for most Human Services Organizations. Despite the law, eligible providers often did not receive the COLA due to the former Administration's practice of 'notwithstanding' the statute. As a result, community-based agencies fell into a fiscal hole and at the present time we are unable to pay competitive salaries **AND** cover expenses associated with the operation of our programs such as gasoline, maintenance, health insurance, food, supplies, etc.

This year the Governor proposed a 1.5% COLA for the Human Services field, to include mental health and addiction prevention, treatment, recovery and harm reduction programs and services. The Senate and Assembly support a 3.2% in total, and we are grateful for this support. However, the Senate and Assembly bills both include a restriction that would tie provider's hands when it comes to using some of these funds to pay for their operations, bills and to keep the lights on. Restricting the COLA in such a way that eligible agencies cannot use it for several purposes defeats the point of ensuring sustainability of services for New Yorkers in need of mental health and addictions care.

The final enacted budget should include a 3.2% COLA that permits providers to do two things at the same time: increase salaries and wages for our valued staff **AND** pay our bills.