



May 22, 2024

Honorable Kathy Hochul  
Governor of New York State  
Executive Chamber  
New York State Capitol  
Albany, NY 12224

Dr. Chinazo Cunningham  
OASAS Commissioner  
1450 Western Avenue  
Albany, NY 12203

Dear Governor Hochul and Commissioner Cunningham,

The NYS Council for Community Behavioral Healthcare recognizes and values the support New York State Office of Addiction Services and Supports (OASAS) offers to all programs that serve vulnerable New Yorkers through addiction prevention, treatment, recovery, and harm reduction services. We recognize the effort put forth to ensure funding to support those goals is continuous and uninterrupted.

However, one particular cost savings measure included in the 2024-2025 Enacted State Budget will result in the elimination of \$8.4 million in funding for services as of July 1, 2024, extremely short notice and resulting in the harsh termination of value services and the employment of those providing the services. The particular services in question are vocational services, workforce training and day rehab services. The elimination of these services appears to be particularly egregious given the efforts OASAS has engaged in to stand up OASAS Part 820 Program Services with 3 levels of care to include the all-important Reintegration Level that is focused on assisting New Yorkers to transition into the community and to maintain their community tenure. Meaningful employment is essential to sustained recovery.

As always, the NYS Council is committed to identifying potential solutions to address the barriers to care that prevent New Yorkers from realizing sustained recovery. As such,

the Council requests the funding be restored so that contracts are honored through June 30, 2025. In the following paragraphs we offer another example of a similar program that is still funded, the positive impact of the services and alternative funding streams that might be accessed to continue the services.

Earmarking **state workforce funding** for workforce training of specific populations or disabilities is not unique to OASAS. This approach has successfully been carried out through the HIV Employment Initiative (HEI) which allows services from eligible organizations to address the employment and training needs of persons living with HIV, helping them to reenter the workforce and access supportive services once working. That initiative receives \$1.1 million annually. Similarly, when these services are provided as part of OASAS recovery, they strengthen the recovery process and allow people to reclaim active lives and rejoin and enhance their communities. The 50 programs operating around New York State today are helping address the workforce shortage by returning individuals to employment and strengthening families.

Therefore, the NYS Council asks that the Executive review all options available to restore the \$8.4 million necessary to continue the valuable training programs for individuals in recovery, **including accessing some of the \$6 billion available for the next 3 years through the approved amendment to the New York Medicaid Section 1115 Demonstration.** The 1115 Plan has a component that will expand the health care workforce and much of the OASAS funding was used to train vocational counselors, at least some of which are persons in recovery. When combined with the behavioral health workforce shortage, the loss of recovery support and jobs is unacceptable to the community at this time. If federal funding is available to expand the health care workforce and establish career pathways and training programs for entry level social care workers, then we urge those funds be directed toward the 50 programs impacted by this short-sighted budget cut.

The NYS Council is eager to work with the Executive in conjunction with OASAS to identify additional solutions that will permit impacted agencies to continue this important work.

Thank you for your consideration of this important request.

Lauri Cole, Executive Director  
NYS Council for Community Behavioral Healthcare