

Joint Legislative Public Hearings On the 2024-2025 Executive Budget Proposal

Testimony before

The New York State Senate Finance Committee

And

The New York State Assembly Ways and Means Committee

on the Mental Hygiene Budget

Hudson Valley Clubhouse

Thank you for this opportunity to present Hudson Valley Clubhouse's testimony concerning the State's budget for the upcoming fiscal year. Hudson Valley Clubhouse is a community-based program designed to support recovery and mitigate social isolation of people living with serious mental illness. Located in Poughkeepsie, we opened our Clubhouse on January 2, 2024, and within a month have more than 20 members, and are growing daily.

We are the first accredited Clubhouse in New York State outside of New York City, and our plan is to serve as a pilot for accredited Clubhouses across the State, with the support of the Office of Mental Health.

The Clubhouse model starts with the idea that "community is therapy." We use the term member to reflect the voluntary, community-based nature of Clubhouses. Members and an intentionally small, Clubhouse-trained staff work in partnership, sharing responsibility for the Clubhouse's functioning, activities and success.

The Clubhouse model centers on the belief that work and work-mediated relationships are restorative. Clubhouse staff and members together develop "work units" – for example employment, education, culinary, wellness, or advocacy/communications – which reflect members' interests and concerns, and guide productive daily endeavor. The Clubhouse model embraces member choice, allowing members to find their own identity and purpose.

We believe Hudson Valley Clubhouse plays an essential integrative role in ensuring access to mental health services in Dutchess County. Working locally with agencies in Poughkeepsie, including our two major hospitals, Mid Hudson Regional and Vassar, and with partner providers including Family Services, Hudson River Housing, the Crisis Stabilization Center, Exodus, LEAD, NAMI, Mental Health America, and numerous others, we seek to enhance that network of services for individuals who too often fall through gaps in the system. We have received strong local support from the Dutchess County Executive and the Department of Mental Health, as we have built our place in the community of providers over the past year, and opened our program in the past month.

Hudson Valley Clubhouse is part of a coalition of over 350 Clubhouses globally and 200 plus in the United States, under the mentorship of Clubhouse International. Our sister Clubhouses include Fountain House and 10 Clubhouses in New York City. In addition to training Clubhouse staff and members, and regularly accrediting Clubhouses, Clubhouse International oversees studies of efficacy both regionally and nationally. Key findings from these studies indicate:

- Clubhouse membership has been shown to cut the number of hospitalizations by one-third and the average number of hospital days per year by 70%
- At an average \$40/member/day, Clubhouses are 1/3 – 1/2 the cost of other mental health care models, with equal or better efficacy
- One year of holistic recovery services can be delivered to Clubhouse members for the same cost as a 2-week psychiatric hospital stay.

- The employment rate at accredited Clubhouses tops 42%, which is 2-3 times that for adults in the public mental health system.

Hudson Valley Clubhouse has already initiated an ongoing longitudinal research program with Marist College, to focus on the efficacy of our Clubhouse in Poughkeepsie and Dutchess County. Our first Marist class led by Professor and Psychology Department Chair Mary Stone met with Clubhouse staff and members in January 2024 to begin their work.

We are very pleased that Governor Hochul has committed significant state funds to support mental health. And we are encouraged that Commissioner Ann Sullivan of the Department of Mental Health has publicly stated her support for the Clubhouse model, and for our Hudson Valley Clubhouse.

To date, however, there has been no funding support for Clubhouse expansion outside of New York City in the State's executive budget proposal. The psychosocial rehabilitation model that has been in place for many years does not reflect the accredited Clubhouse standards. The existing state funded psychosocial rehabilitation community clubs lack clear programmatic design and the supportive evidence that accredited Clubhouses provide. We ask that the State revisit the Clubhouse model, and develop clear guidelines for expanding this essential program.

Without Clubhouses in the continuum of care, New Yorkers living with serious mental illness, including those in smaller, underserved cities and more rural areas, will not receive an adequate level of care to address their full range of needs, both psychological and social – which can lead to increased healthcare and social service costs, and premature mortality. Our goal is to lift people with serious illness out of the worsening and unsustainable cycles of homelessness, hospitalization and incarceration.

We respectfully invite all members of the Legislature to visit Hudson Valley Clubhouse at 98 Cannon Street in Poughkeepsie, to gain a stronger understanding of the work that we do daily to support our members living with mental illness.

We look forward to seeing you soon and to continuing this important conversation.