



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Samra G. Brouk

## Senator Samra Brouk, Chair of Senate Mental Health Committee, Secures Essential Funding for Statewide Mental Health Services in One-House Budget

SAMRA G. BROUK March 16, 2021

| ISSUE: **2021-22 STATE BUDGET, MENTAL HEALTH**

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

March 16, 2021

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**Albany, NY** - Yesterday, the New York State Senate passed its one-house budget resolution for FY 2021-22 (Senate Resolution No. 504). Key provisions of the Senate's proposed budget support the mental health needs of New Yorkers statewide, at a time when mental health challenges due to COVID-19 and racial injustice are devastating our communities. Budgets are a statement of values, and the budget proposed by the New York State Senate rejects an austerity mindset and instead makes much-needed, meaningful investments in the mental health of all New Yorkers.

“Residents in the 55th District and across the state are demanding support for their mental health,” **stated Senator Samra Brouk**. “After more than a year of social isolation, changes to work and schooling, economic insecurity, and illness and loss due to an unprecedented global pandemic, New Yorkers are hurting. The mental health impacts of COVID-19 will be felt for many years to come, and our state has a duty to invest in our recovery. I have been fighting for renewed, equitable, meaningful investment in mental health services statewide, and this budget provides some important wins for our state. Thank you to my colleagues in the Senate for their vision and commitment to mental health services for all New Yorkers.”

Highlights for mental health services in the NYS Senate One-House Budget include:

#### **Restoring the 5% cuts to services proposed in Executive Budget**

The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted gaps in our healthcare system, including mental health services. The Senate one-house budget rejects the Governor’s proposed 5% cuts to mental health services, which would harm our healthcare system and impact New Yorkers who need support.

#### **Providing essential funding for schools**

Students are some of the most impacted by COVID-19, and our school communities will be on the frontlines of supporting children’s mental health as we emerge from this pandemic. The Senate version of the NYS budget increases School Aid by \$5.7 billion (20.5 percent), including a \$1.37 billion (7.4 percent) Foundation Aid increase and \$3.85 billion in federal Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations (CRRSA) Act funding. This will allow schools to dedicate essential resources to student mental health.

#### **Protecting supportive housing**

The Senate budget protects crucial investment in supportive housing and capital improvements. More than 40,000 New Yorkers with serious psychiatric disabilities rely on

supportive housing programs: a safe place to call home that can serve people with co-occurring conditions and the management of complicated medication regimens. The Senate version of the state budget protects funding for supportive housing for people with mental illness and those in recovery—an important investment that prevents the cost to taxpayers of much more expensive institutionalization, hospitalization, emergency care, incarceration, and homelessness.

### **Rejecting cuts to community reinvestment**

Starting in 1993, New York State law requires that funds saved from downsizing the state hospital system through closures and census reductions must be "reinvested" to create more community-based services. The first draft of the Governor's budget would have eliminated this reinvestment for 2021. The public mental health system continues to struggle to develop comprehensive community-based treatment and rehabilitation systems for persons with mental illnesses. The Senate version of the NYS budget rejects these cuts to community reinvestment.

### **Restoring the 1% COLA for workers**

The proposed Senate one-house budget provides \$15 million for the Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) for workers in the Office of Mental Health. This workforce was essential during the COVID-19 pandemic, but they have not received a COLA for many years. This increase will provide much-needed and well-deserved higher wages for the mental health workforce.

### **Rejecting the closure of inpatient beds across the state**

More than 200 inpatient mental health bed closures were proposed in the Governor's Executive Budget, amounting to \$22 million lost to the mental health system. The Senate budget rejected this proposal, recognizing the need for mental health services statewide, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic. New Yorkers should not be left to face increased

hurdles to accessing inpatient care.

The NYS 2021-22 budget will be negotiated and passed before the April 1st deadline.

To review the full Senate Majority One-house State Budget Resolution, please visit:

<https://www.nysenate.gov/legislation/resolutions/2021/r504>

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*New York State Senator Samra Brouk (pronounced Sah-mra Br-uuk) represents the incredibly diverse 55th Senate District, stretching from the southern shores of Lake Ontario, through Rochester's Neighborhood of the Arts, and south to Finger Lakes wine country. It includes the towns of Victor, East Bloomfield, West Bloomfield, Richmond, Bristol, South Bristol, Canadice, and Naples in Ontario County and the towns of Rush, Mendon, Pittsford, Perinton, Penfield, East Rochester, and Irondequoit, plus the east side of the City of Rochester in Monroe County. Senator Brouk serves as the Chair of the Mental Health Committee and sits on Health, Education, Elections, Women's Issues, Aging, and Alcoholism and Substance Abuse committees.*