



**Written Testimony
NYS 2025 Joint Legislative Budget Hearing
Human Services
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**Submitted by:
Cristina Abbattista
Policy Analyst
Urban Pathways**

Thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony on the needs of the human services workforce. My name is Cristina Abbattista, and I am the Policy Analyst at Urban Pathways.

Urban Pathways is a nonprofit homeless services and supportive housing provider serving single adults. Last year, we served over 2,500 unique individuals through a full continuum of services including street outreach, drop-in services, safe havens and stabilization beds, extended-stay residence, and permanent supportive housing in Manhattan, Brooklyn, Queens, and the Bronx. We also offer a wide range of additional programming to meet the needs of the people we serve, including our Total Wellness, Employment, and Advocacy Programs. We hold contracts with the Office of Mental Health for licensed residential programs and permanent supportive housing, both congregate and scattered site models.

Our services are not possible without the hard work of our dedicated staff. Our programs require case managers to connect the people we serve with services and resources to meet their goals, maintenance workers to keep buildings clean, security staff to ensure the safety of our residents, and cooks to provide healthy meals. Unfortunately, we struggle to keep these positions filled. Urban Pathways currently has a 20% staff vacancy rate, and an annual turnover rate of 26%. High turnover ultimately has the most negative impact on the people we serve, as their needs are best met by building relationships with staff over time. It also puts strain on current staff members who must take on more work.

Our staff are part of an 800,000-person nonprofit human services workforce providing essential services on behalf of the government that has faced years of underfunding. This workforce,

predominantly women and people of color, makes 30% less than their government counterparts doing comparable work. Over the next four years, New Yorkers will need our services more than ever and our sector will need resources to weather challenges ahead. The State must invest in human services nonprofits so that we can fully staff our programs and take care of our workers who take care of New Yorkers in need.

To ensure a fair and comprehensive Human Services COLA, we ask that the Legislature:

- 1. Fund a 7.8% COLA in the Fiscal Year 2026 Budget to align with the CPI and what we were shortchanged in the last two years.**
- 2. Pass S1580/ A2590 to expand the Human Services COLA to include all state-contracted human services workers.**

Establish a Human Services Employee Wage Board (S4675/A8937) *bill numbers subject to change

While a COLA is essential for providing increases to the human services workforce in line with inflation, it is not a solution for the low base wages that are a result of underfunded government contracts. Many nonprofit workers leave the sector for higher paying government jobs, where they have comparable responsibilities and get paid 30% more. Nonprofits should not be seen as a training ground for government and private sector work. To do so is a disservice to the people and communities we serve. Nonprofits need to retain high quality, experienced workers to ensure New Yorkers with the greatest needs are receiving the highest quality services possible.

As a first step to creating a comprehensive plan to address wage disparities, we ask the Legislature to **pass S4675/ A8937 to establish a human services employee wage board, tasked with investigating wage inequity in the human services sector and developing recommendations on adequate and equitable wages.**

The State must invest in the human services workforce to ensure that we can best serve the communities that rely on us, especially as we face the challenges ahead in the next four years.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony. We look forward to working with you this session to pass a 7.8% COLA for human services contracts, ensure the COLA is inclusive of the full workforce, and establish a human services employee wage board.

For questions or more information, please contact:
cabbattista@urbanpathways.org