

# Families Together in New York State

## 2022 Joint Mental Hygiene Hearing

***Families Together in New York State*** is a family-run organization that represents families of children with social, emotional, behavioral health and cross-systems challenges. Our goal is to ensure that *ALL* families and youth have the support they need in order to succeed. We represent thousands of families from across the state whose children have been involved in many systems including mental health, substance abuse, special education, juvenile justice, and foster care. Our board and staff are made up primarily of family members and youth who have been involved in these systems.

***Families Together 2022 Policy Agenda is created by families of children and youth with social, emotional, behavioral and cross-systems challenges.***

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### **Address the Children's Behavioral Health Crisis**

**GOAL: All children, youth and their families must have timely, affordable access to appropriate children's behavioral health services within their community regardless of their insurance status.**

Both the U.S. Surgeon General and the American Academy of Pediatrics have declared that we are facing a National Youth Mental Health Emergency. As parents and young people with lived experience, we understand this was true well before the destabilizing impact of COVID-19. After decades of chronic underinvestment in children's behavioral healthcare, this Executive Budget proposal is a much needed reprieve. However, we know more must be done to address this crisis and do so with the urgency that families are feeling on the ground. Our youth and families are in crisis mode and so is the workforce meant to support them.

#### **From the Executive Budget Proposal, we support:**

- Expansion of Children and Family Treatment and Support Services (CFTSS) into Child Health Plus (CHP).
- Rate enhancements for CFTSS, Home and Community Based Services (HCBS), clinics, and Residential Treatment Facilities (RTFs).
- The 5.4% Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) for human services that includes CFTSS and HCBS previously left out of the statute. We would like all these programs as well as Care Coordination included in future COLAs.
- Funding bonuses for workers, but be sure to

- 7.5 million to expand Home-Based Crisis Intervention (HCBI) Program with the intent of avoiding inappropriate emergency department stays and reducing the risk of self-harm.
- Multi-year funding to fund implementation of the 988 crisis line.
- \$50M for the Recovery from COVID School (RECOVS) Program for high needs school districts to hire mental health professionals, expand school-based mental health services, and other related programming.
- \$15M for school climate, alternatives to discipline, and other school-based mental health grants.
- Reinvestment of \$111 million dollars recuperated from Medicaid Managed Care underspending on behavioral health for OMH and OASAS to fund rate increases for community mental health and addiction services.
- Over \$400 Million in Funding for OASAS programs including mobile team expansion, opioid stewardship programs, and harm reduction.
- Requiring NYS to use competitive bid process when identifying managed care organizations to participate in the administration behavioral health services carved into Medicaid managed care.

**The Senate and Assembly should add:**

- \$5.5M to expand funding for family support services for non-Medicaid families like Family and Youth Peer Support services, respite, skill building, and care coordination.
- Telehealth reforms to ensure telehealth rate parity between audio, audio- video, and in-person (S.5505/A6256)
- A permanent funding model to ensure at least one Youth Clubhouse exists in each county.
- Creation a Black Youth Suicide Prevention Task Force to reverse troubling trends in Black youth suicide in New York (S3408/A1716).
- Additional efforts to address chronic workforce issues, including a worker retention tax credit, employee assistance grants, tuition assistance, loan forgiveness, and comprehensive worker pipeline strategies.