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Contact: cbh@berlinrosen.com

Child Mental Health Advocates Respond to One House Budget, Urge Greater Investment in Services to Stop Child Mental Health Crisis

Prior to Pandemic, Suicide was the Second Leading Cause of Death for NY Children Age 15-19, Third Leading Cause of Death for Children Age 5-14

NEW YORK -- In response to the Senate and Assembly One House Budgets, Alice Bufkin, director of policy for child and adolescent health at the Citizens' Committee for Children, issued the following statement on behalf of the [Campaign for Healthy Minds, Healthy Kids](#):

"We are pleased to see the State Senate and Assembly make important strides towards addressing the crisis in children's behavioral health, which existed long before the COVID-19 pandemic and has only worsened as the unprecedented trauma of the last year weighs on children and teens across New York.

"The Senate and Assembly One House budgets include critical provisions to help combat the pandemic's strain on children's mental and emotional health. In particular, we applaud both bodies for rejecting cuts to Medicaid, local assistance, and public health funding. We thank the Assembly for proposing coverage of Children and Family Treatment and Support Services in the Child Health Plus program, as well as extending the postpartum period for pregnant people and proposing funds for suicide prevention grants. We also support the Senate's proposal to add OMH peers as eligible for telehealth reimbursement. We urge elected leaders to negotiate an Enacted Budget that includes all of these provisions.

"However, we believe the Enacted Budget must go even further to address these issues and ensure every child in New York can access the life-saving behavioral health care they need. The Assembly included a requirement that at least 20% of funds for community mental health reinvestment be made available for workforce recruitment and retention. While we wholeheartedly support workforce recruitment and retention, this proposal protects only a portion of Community Mental Health Reinvestment. We believe the entire \$22 million must remain available for community mental health, rather than go into the General Fund as proposed in the Executive Budget.

"Additionally, we know that much more is needed if New York children are to recover and thrive. The American Rescue Plan Act includes billions of federal dollars for mental health and substance use supports. Especially given this, New York has a responsibility to make transformative investments in children's behavioral health services to help prevent the long-term and intergenerational effects of pandemic on social and emotional health. We support the inclusion in the Assembly One House proposal of additional funding for school-based mental health supports, but believe even more resources are needed for school-based mental health clinics, community schools, and services in early care and education settings. Moreover, we believe the state must make substantial investments in community-based behavioral health providers, with the goal of expanding clinical capacity and addressing deep-seated workforce shortages. We look forward to continued work with state leaders to create a system and a budget that addresses all children and families in need."

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ABOUT

[The Campaign for Healthy Minds, Healthy Kids](#) is a statewide coalition of behavioral health providers, advocates, and New York families, joining together to create the public and political will necessary to ensure all children and adolescents in New York receive the high-quality behavioral health services they need.