



April 21, 2020

The Honorable Andrew M Cuomo
Governor of New York State
NYS State Capitol Building
Albany, NY 12224

Dear Governor,

The New York City Chapter of the National Association of Social Workers would like to thank you for your outstanding leadership through the crisis that is COVID-19. You have inspired both confidence and a spirit of cooperation among constituencies, healthcare systems and professions. It is with this in mind that we reach out to you today.

During your daily briefing earlier today, you announced your advocacy efforts with the federal government for hazard pay for our frontline workers. You rightly noted “They are the ones carrying us through this crisis and this crisis is not over.” We could not agree more, Governor and as such, we urge you to include Social Workers in the pool of frontline workers you are vociferously advocating on behalf of.

While we have come to think of the traditional health care workers, such as physicians, nurses and respiratory therapists as the primary caregivers in this crisis, social workers are also a vital component to patient care responding to the onslaught of the pandemic with professionalism, courage and an unwavering dedication. They are critical to the healthcare system that we all rely on and while often in the background, they are present in every central command center of a crisis and they are taking incredible risks to do so.

They are working with patients, physicians, nurses, administrators, insurance companies, Medicaid, Medicare, and families and friends to coordinate care. Due to the COVID-19 crisis, they have increased caseloads with greater complexities and additional responsibilities. They are assisting families with the gruesome and heartbreaking tasks of navigating through the maze of locating an undertaker for a loved ones remains, while juggling an ever expanding caseload of equally distressing situations. There is no time for self-care and no time to process the grief.

Outside of the hospital system, they are providing intakes, assessments, medication management, assistance with daily living skills, coordination of online appointments, and even job searches, in facilities across sectors of care being ravaged by the virus, such as homeless shelters, foster care congregate care facilities, juvenile justice, child welfare agencies and criminal justice facilities. They are still doing home visits when necessary – also, across service delivery sectors from child welfare to palliative care. And of course, they are also working with the severely mentally ill in psychiatric hospitals and units across the state. They are often not

supplied with PPE, leaving them caught between their ethical practice guidelines of providing care and risk to their own life. They are, of course, becoming infected as well.

As you noted in your briefing, Governor, when many of us ... “were home with the doors locked dealing with cabin fever, they were out dealing with the coronavirus.” Indeed, they were, and they will continue to be there to pick up the pieces as the pandemic winds down. Please include these unsung heroes in your advocacy efforts for hazard pay. In your own words “Pay them what they deserve.”

Sincerely,

Dr. Claire Green-Forde, LCSW

Executive Director

National Association of Social Workers NYC Chapter