Memorandum of Support

The Mental Health Budget and Article VII

A.3007/S.4007

The New York State Occupational Therapy Association supports this legislation with additional recommendations.

NYSOTA supports the Governor’s proposals to expand residential beds by providing $890 million in capital to build 3,500 new residential beds for people with serious mental health conditions who need varying levels of supports. Available housing with proper support services is a critical need in mental health care. The lack of housing creates extensive delays in discharges from hospitals resulting in the occupation of hospital beds that would be better utilized for people in the acute phase of an illness. In addition, supportive housing programs are a significant part of establishing stability and a pathway to recovery for individuals disabled by their condition.

NYSOTA supports the Governor’s proposal to add 26 more Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinics (CCBHCs) to provide integrated behavioral health care, providing both mental health and substance use disorder services for New Yorkers of all ages, tripling the number of CCBHCs from 13 to 39. OMH should work to ensure a geographical distribution of these programs to include rural areas.

NYSOTA supports the creation of 50 new Critical Time Intervention (CTI) teams to provide wrap-around services for discharged patients. However, again OMH
must work to assure effective geographical distribution of these teams to meet the needs of rural areas also.

NYSOTA supports the Governor’s proposals to expand mental health services for children and families by investing an additional $12 million in the HealthySteps program and Home Based Crisis Intervention (HBCI) teams, $5 million for High Fidelity wrap around supports, and $10 million to develop school-based clinics. In addition, we support the proposal to expand screening for Adverse Childhood Experiences in schools which is in the education part of the budget. NYSOTA believes that the expansion of mental health services in primary and secondary education is essential to the health development of our children and an important investment in our future.

NYSOTA supports the Governor’s proposal of $7.7 million in additional State funding for incarceration and post incarceration community reentry services, for a total of $11.5 million, to reduce crime recidivism rates by meeting the behavioral, health, employment and educational needs of individuals returning to their communities.

NYSOTA supports the Governor’s proposal to expand insurance coverage for mental health services, close critical gaps in commercial insurance coverage for mental health services; prohibit insurance plans from denying access to medically necessary, high-need, acute and crisis mental health services for both adults and children; requiring commercial insurance providers to pay for school-based services.

While NYSOTA supports the Governor’s proposal to restore 1,000 inpatient psychiatric beds across the state we remain concerned that if the capacity and quality of community mental health services is not greatly reformed, a thousand beds will come with a thousand revolving doors. The shortage of qualified licensed mental health professionals and quality long-term rehabilitation and supportive day treatment programs needs to be addressed with much greater funding to attract and retain licensed mental health professionals. The proposed 2.5% cola not only does not keep up with the cost of living, but also maintains uncompetitive salaries. In addition, while the reimbursement rates for outpatient mental health programs have increased over recent years, they remain uncompetitive and unable to adequately staff outpatient mental health programs with licensed mental health professionals, especially professionals of race and culture that might meet the needs of many patients. These inadequate reimbursement rates result in less than effective
treatment programs, and contribute to higher rehospitalization and lower recovery rates.

The Assembly and the Senate should call on OMH to revisit the assumptions underlying their rate setting methodology for outpatient mental health programs for adults and children.

Occupational therapy is a licensed profession that provides mental health care by helping an individual through teaching, doing and practicing activities to recover function in their self-care (activities of daily living), their management of their home (instrumental activities of daily living), their social functioning, as well as their efforts to return to education or work.

Since psychiatry deinstitutionalization, adults with serious mental health conditions now have limited access to occupational therapy services. This is one of the unspoken disparities between health care and mental health care. A child with a developmental delay can receive occupational therapy, an elderly adult with a stroke can receive occupational therapy, but an adult with a serious mental health condition, such as schizophrenia or bi-polar disorder, cannot. That is an injustice to these people.

The New York State Occupational Therapy Association supports many of the recommendations in the Governor’s budget and Article VII legislation regarding improvements to mental health care. However, we assert that much more must be done to improve the access to quality community mental health services that children and adults deserve.