

THE GERIATRIC MENTAL HEALTH ALLIANCE OF NEW YORK

FUNDING IS NEEDED FOR GERIATRIC MENTAL HEALTH

A Statement To A Westchester State Senate Delegation Forum February 8, 2019

My name is Michael Friedman. I am the Voluntary Chair of the Geriatric Mental Health Alliance of New York, an advocacy and education group with over 2500 individual members. I live in White Plains, in Senator Stewart-Cousins' district. Lisa Furst, who is Director of the Alliance, is with me. We are speaking on behalf of the Alliance and of over 20 additional organizations, (listed on the back of this page).

We are here today to say that funding is needed for geriatric mental health in NYS and to urge you to **support adding \$2 million to the NYS Budget for 2019-20 to increase funding for the Geriatric Mental Health and Chemical Dependence Demonstration Grants Program**. This program, operated by the New York State Office of Mental Health, has not had an increase in over a decade despite its documented success in developing self-sustaining behavioral health services for older New Yorkers.

The initial 3 phases of the demonstration grants program focused primarily on integration of physical and behavioral health services. The current phase, which began in 2017 and will continue until 2021, is an ambitious effort to develop "triple partnerships," collaborations among local mental health, substance abuse, and aging service providers.

While these projects unfold, there is an opportunity to **establish new demonstration projects to help older adults with serious behavioral health problems to age in the community (i.e., "age in place")**. This is critical for New York State's efforts to achieve Long Term Care Reform, i.e., to decrease reliance on very expensive and often undesirable institutional services.

Sad to say, New York State has done far too little to address the vast demographic shift that began in 2011, a shift that will result in there being more older adults than children in not so many years. Adding \$2 million to the geriatric mental health and chemical dependence demonstration grants obviously won't address all the needs emerging from the changing demography, but it would, at very little cost, lay the groundwork for much more significant developments over time.

We have given you more detailed information about the mental health needs of an aging New York State and would be happy to provide you with briefings when you are not so pressed for time.

Thank you for your consideration.

Contact: Lisa Furst, Director. 212-614-6313. lfurst@vibrant.org

This testimony is also supported by the following organizations.

List in Formation

1. Albert Einstein College of Medicine
2. The Bridge, Inc.
3. The Center for Innovation in Mental Health
4. The Coalition of Behavioral Health Organizations, Inc.
5. Coordinated Behavioral Care
6. Geriatric Mental Health Alliance of Orange County
7. Icahn School of Medicine at Mt. Sinai
8. JASA
9. Lifespan
10. The Medicare Rights Center
11. The Mental Health Association in New York State (MHANYS)
12. The Mental Health Association of Orange County
13. Montefiore Medical Center
14. Morningside Retirement and Health Services
15. NAMI-New York State
16. New York Association of Psychiatric Rehabilitative Services (NYAPRS)
17. Service Program for Older People (SPOP)
18. SUNY Downstate Medical Center
19. University of Rochester Medical Center
20. Vibrant Emotional Health (formerly MHA of New York City)
21. Weill Cornell Medical College
22. Weill Cornell Institute of Geriatric Psychiatry
23. Westchester Geriatric Mental Health Collaborative
24. Visiting Nurse Service of New York