



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

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A Mental Health Crisis in Communities of Color—and how New York can Fix It

SAMRA G. BROUK March 24, 2025



New York State's greatest asset is its diversity. Generations of immigrants and communities of color have shaped New York into a cultural and economic powerhouse, bringing with them traditions, languages, and resilience that enrich our state.

But while our diversity is a source of pride, it is also a stark reminder of the inequities that persist—especially when it comes to mental health care. Despite the growing need for culturally competent services, too many New Yorkers, particularly in communities of color,

struggle to access the support they deserve. While 58% of White New Yorkers receive necessary mental health care, the numbers drop dramatically for Latinx (39%), Asian American & Pacific Islander (38%), and Black (30%) residents. This disparity isn't just troubling—it's a crisis.

In an effort to support our communities of color, leading nonprofit organizations—including the Asian American Federation, Hispanic Federation, New York Immigration Coalition, and New York Urban League—have come together to form the Investing in Mental Health Programs to Advance Cultural Treatment (IMPACT) Coalition. We are advocating for \$10 million in the FY2026 Budget to address critical gaps in mental health care for our communities, a priority we are championing alongside Assemblymember Jessica González-Rojas.

This funding would be transformative. The IMPACT Coalition's plan offers a four-pronged solution to address the crisis. First, it would develop a pipeline of diverse mental health professionals who are fluent in the languages and cultures of Asian American & Pacific Islanders, Black, and Latino communities. With **over 80% of psychologists** in the U.S. being White, and most providing services only in English, this initiative would ensure that non-English speakers have access to culturally competent care. Second, it would launch a statewide public education campaign to combat mental health stigma in communities of color by providing accessible resources both online and in person. Third, the plan would fund a network of 80-120 community-based organizations across New York to offer culturally competent clinical and non-clinical mental health services, tailored to diverse needs. Finally, it would strengthen the capacity of these organizations to serve both long-established and newly arrived immigrant communities, ensuring the long-term sustainability of essential mental health resources.

This need for funding is critical, as communities of color are rapidly growing. For example, between 2018 and 2023, New York State saw significant increases in its Asian population across multiple districts. In parts of the Bronx and Westchester, the Asian population grew by 121%. In Ithaca, Tompkins, Cortland, and parts of Broome County, the Asian population increased by 120%. On Long Island, in Eastern Suffolk County, there was a surge of nearly 106%. These numbers represent more than just statistics—they represent generations of immigrants and communities of color planting roots, building families, and committing to New York as their home.

But as Asian, Black, Hispanic, and other marginalized communities invest in New York, New York must invest in them. Many of these communities are facing a serious mental health crisis. Suicide rates are rising, trauma from the COVID-19 pandemic lingers, poverty continues to deepen, and racially targeted violence remains a threat. The anti-migrant rhetoric and policies of the Trump administration have exacerbated this trauma, particularly for families. Many New York families from immigrant communities live in constant fear—afraid to send their children to school, attend places of worship, and even leave home, unsure if they and/or their loved ones will be detained by Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) while they are away.

To address this crisis and these gaps, IMPACT calls on Governor Hochul and our state legislators in Albany to remember that New Yorkers show up for each other, and right now, many of our own communities are suffering in silence.

This investment is not just about expanding access to mental health services for communities facing significant challenges; it is about breaking the cycle of stigma and isolation that prevents so many from seeking help. Ensuring our communities, and thus, future generations, receive the support they deserve is not just an investment in minority populations; it is an investment in all New Yorkers.

It's time to make an impact by approving mental health funding for those who make up the vital fabric of our great state.

(Op-ed originally posted on Empire Report by Senator Samra Brouk and Joo Han, Interim Co-Executive Director, Asian American Federation)