



February 13, 2024

**NY State Assemblymember Gunther, Chair  
Assembly Mental Health Committee**

**NY State Senator Brouk,  
Senate Mental Health Committee**

Dear Committee Chairs,

On behalf of the **NYS Area Health Education Center System (AHEC)**, we thank you for the opportunity to present this as testimony to the Assembly Joint Committees' Public Hearing on Mental Hygiene.

The NYS AHEC System, comprised of its Statewide Office housed at University at Buffalo, nine Area Health Education Centers (AHECs), and two regional offices located throughout New York State respectfully request the **continued inclusion of \$2.2 million for AHEC in your 2024-25 State Executive Budget**. We would also like to express our sincere gratitude for including a restoration of this base funding for NYS AHEC in your proposed 2023-24 Executive and Final Budgets.

As New York State continues to address the healthcare workforce shortages, made worse by the Covid-19 pandemic, **NYS AHEC is proud to have partnered with the State to attract new providers to areas with severe shortages and where culturally competent care is most needed**. The \$2.2 million, combined with the legislature's commitment of \$500,000 in the enacted 2023-24 State Budget represents a critical investment in AHEC and the State's healthcare workforce. The annual continuation of these funds allows the NYS AHEC System to meet the 1:1 state funding match as required by HRSA. Without state funding, NYS AHEC will not receive federal funds.

Detailed information about our history and impact are provided in the **attached document**.

Sincerely,

**Leishia B. Smallwood, MPA**  
Director, New York State AHEC System

*Leadership for the New York State AHEC System is provided by community-based centers, the Statewide Office at the University at Buffalo and regional offices at Upstate Medical University, Albany Medical College and The Institute for Family Health.*

**(716) 816-7225**

**Fax (716) 845-6899**

**[www.nysahec.org](http://www.nysahec.org)**

New York State AHEC System Statewide Office University at Buffalo Department of Family Medicine 77 Goodell Street, Suite 220, Buffalo, NY 14203