



**THE NEW YORK STATE  
SENATE AND ASSEMBLY**

1/10/20

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

Dear Governor Cuomo:

We write to share concerns voiced by our constituents about the inability of children and families to access behavioral health services in their communities. As the opioid epidemic continues to impact thousands of infants and families and as youth suicide rates steeply rise, we urge specific attention be paid to completing implementation of the Children's Subcommittee of the Medicaid Redesign Team (MRT) recommendations on children's behavioral health. The reforms are poised to enhance access to these vital services at a time when approximately half of New York's children who desperately need mental health treatment or counseling are going without. It is indeed a critical time to invest in children's behavioral health services.

**While the implementation of these substantive reforms is challenging, the design and plan for children's behavioral health capacity expansion and new resources are years in the making through the MRT process. In particular, the new Medicaid State Plan Services, called Children and Family Treatment and Support Services (CFTSS), offered unprecedented improvements in access to care for approximately 200,000 children enrolled in Medicaid.**

**Despite this recent step forward, the enhanced rates for CFTSS, which have ensured robust provider participation, were scheduled to be reduced at the end of the 2019 calendar year, putting many children and families at risk of losing access to this support. Moreover, it is important to note that even with the recent progress on CFTSS, less than five percent of eligible children are currently receiving services. At a time when CFTSS is still being implemented, acute rate reductions would indeed be devastating, and potentially fatal to providers' ability to offer these vital services to our youth and families.**

Further, the final MRT Report in 2011 promised expansion of capacity and additional resources for children's behavioral health care. The demand for children's services in our communities has grown since then, but the fact remains that we need more providers willing to offer the new CFTSS. Instead,

providers are dropping out of the program due to rate reductions that are already taking place or are imminent within the coming weeks.

Therefore, we the undersigned, respectfully urge continued, permanent investment in CFTSS at an enhanced level to ensure program growth and stability. At the same time, it is imperative that we maintain investments in children's behavioral health services across the board so that implementation of MRT initiatives will continue and services will be preserved.

Sincerely,



Senator David Carlucci



Assemblymember Aileen Gunther



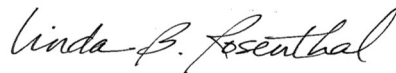
Senator Velmanette Montgomery



Assemblymember Ellen C. Jaffee



Senator Peter B. Harckham



Assemblymember Linda B. Rosenthal

CC:

Senate Majority Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins

Assembly Speaker Carl Heastie

Senator Liz Krueger

Assemblywoman Helene Weinstein

Howard Zucker, Commissioner, New York State Department of Health

Ann Marie T. Sullivan, Commissioner, New York State Office of Mental Health

Arlene González-Sánchez, Commissioner, New York State Office of Addiction Services and Supports

Sheila J. Poole, Commissioner, New York State Office of Children and Family Services

Robert Mujica, State Budget Director, New York State Division of the Budget

Donna Frescatore, New York State Medicaid Director, New York State Department of Health