



Office of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Services

**Testimony of Arlene González-Sánchez, MS, LMSW
NYS OASAS Commissioner**

**Joint Legislative Budget Hearing on Mental Hygiene
SFY 2015-2016 Executive Budget Proposal Testimony**

**Friday, February 27, 2015, 9:30 a.m.
Legislative Office Building, Albany, NY
Hearing Room B**

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Good morning Senator DeFrancisco, Assemblyman Farrell, Senator Amedore, Assemblywoman Rosenthal and distinguished members of the Senate and Assembly Committees. My name is Arlene González-Sánchez, and I am Commissioner of the New York State Office of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Services, one of the nation's largest addiction treatment systems, serving nearly 240,000 people each year.

I am pleased to be here today to discuss Governor Andrew M. Cuomo's 2015-2016 Executive Budget proposal as it relates to the mission of OASAS. First, I would like to briefly highlight some accomplishments we've made during the last year, under Governor Cuomo's leadership, and with continued commitment and support from this Legislature.

A key priority has been implementing the historic laws recently passed to address the heroin and opioid crisis in New York State. We successfully launched Governor Cuomo's Combat Heroin and Prescription Opioid public awareness and education campaign and we have provided anti-overdose naloxone trainings to more than 41,000 people resulting in more than 1,200 lives being saved.

Furthermore, to improve access to medication assisted treatment in areas of need across the state, we have opened two new Opioid Treatment Programs in Buffalo and Plattsburgh and we anticipate opening two additional Opioid Treatment Programs in Albany and Peekskill in the coming months.

Additionally, to address the need for more residential treatment services for young adults with heroin and opioid addiction, we opened a 24-bed Intensive Residential program for young adults in Staten Island.

We also began implementation of steps to transition our system to managed care. To ensure the readiness of all of our stakeholders, we have conducted numerous trainings across the state. We have also developed a provider readiness self-assessment tool to help identify areas where providers need additional technical assistance and training.

So as you can see we have accomplished a great deal.

Now I would like to move to the Governor's Executive Budget proposal as it pertains to OASAS.

Overall, the Executive Budget proposal allows OASAS to continue its support of our prevention, treatment, and recovery system of care. It includes an increase of \$22.5 million from last year's budget for a total of \$600 million in overall funding for OASAS that includes \$115.3 million for state operations and \$471.7 million for Aid to Localities. More specifically, the budget provides \$344 million for treatment, \$84 million in continued support for our prevention providers, and \$45 million for recovery services.

There is also a \$1.9 million annualized investment for additional community-based services. This will be achieved through a planned 5 percent reduction in capacity at our OASAS-operated Addiction Treatment Centers. This will have minimal impact on our operations.

In addition, there is a \$5.8 million increase to support compensation increases for direct care, support and clinical workers at all community-based programs that receive OASAS funds.

The Executive Budget proposal also includes \$5 million from the State's BNP Paribas lawsuit settlement and \$2.8 million in continued funding to address the heroin and prescription opioid epidemic.

The Executive Budget proposal will also allow OASAS to fund Round 4 of the NY/NY III housing initiative creating 80 additional units of permanent housing for chronically homeless families where the head of household has a substance use disorder.

In addition, there is funding available to address challenges our providers are facing. First, there is \$2.3 million to stabilize our Residential Rehabilitation Services for Youth (RRSY) programs which are an essential part of our continuum of care for adolescents. Second, funding is included to address the negative impact on our residential treatment providers resulting from federal changes in food stamp eligibility criteria.

The Executive Budget proposal also maintains the commitment to our five-year Capital Plan and increases funding from \$55 million to \$64 million. This increase will support both new bed development in areas of need and other patient-centered and recovery-oriented projects, including the OASAS residential redesign initiative. Two such capital projects are already underway to address the need for residential treatment programs for young adults in Niagara and Suffolk counties. In fact, we are working with the provider in Niagara County and we hope to open that program in a temporary space while we build a permanent location.

And finally, our Executive Budget commitment will be supplemented by a new \$8 million federal grant recently awarded to OASAS. We will use the grant to support up to 10 community coalitions in their efforts to prevent heroin and prescription opioid addiction among adolescents and young adults.

As always, our objective remains focused on ensuring the delivery of a comprehensive, patient-centered system of care designed to improve the lives of all New Yorkers. Thank you for the opportunity to present the Governor's Executive Budget proposal. I welcome your questions and comments.