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**“Nothing About Us,
Without Us”**

**Testimony of Friends of Recovery New York
(FOR-NY)**

Impact of the FY 2021-2022 Executive Budget Proposal on the NYS Recovery Community

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Presented by:

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Honorably Committee, I am Dr. Angelia Smith-Wilson and as the Executive Director of Friends of Recovery- New York and a family member and ally to the recovery movement, I am honored to be invited by Senate Finance Chair Liz Krueger and Assembly Ways and Means Chair Helene Weinstein to examine the FY 2021-2022 Budget and how it may impact the New York State Recovery Community.

Friends of Recovery-New York represents the voice of individuals and families living in recovery from addiction, families who have lost a family member or people who have been otherwise impacted by addiction. The negative public perception and shame that surrounds addiction has prevented millions of individuals and family members from seeking help. FOR-NY is dedicated to breaking down the barriers created by negative public perception that result in discrimination and policies that block or interfere with accessing recovery support services: access to addiction treatment, healthcare; housing, education and employment.

FOR-NY also works to build an infrastructure around the state through local Recovery Community Organizations (RCOs) that build supports for people living in recovery and others in need. Our network of RCOs are strongly in support of life saving, evidence- based practices to support people seeking recovery.

Budget and Legislative Accomplishments over the past 5 years

FOR-NY has been in existence since 2008 and thanks to advocates, in partnership with statewide decision makers, FOR-NY was able to hire staff starting in 2015. Since then, FOR-NY has sought out recovery champions from around the state to build recovery capital locally, and advocate on a statewide level. Through these efforts, we have made the following accomplishments with New York State dollars and advocacy efforts:

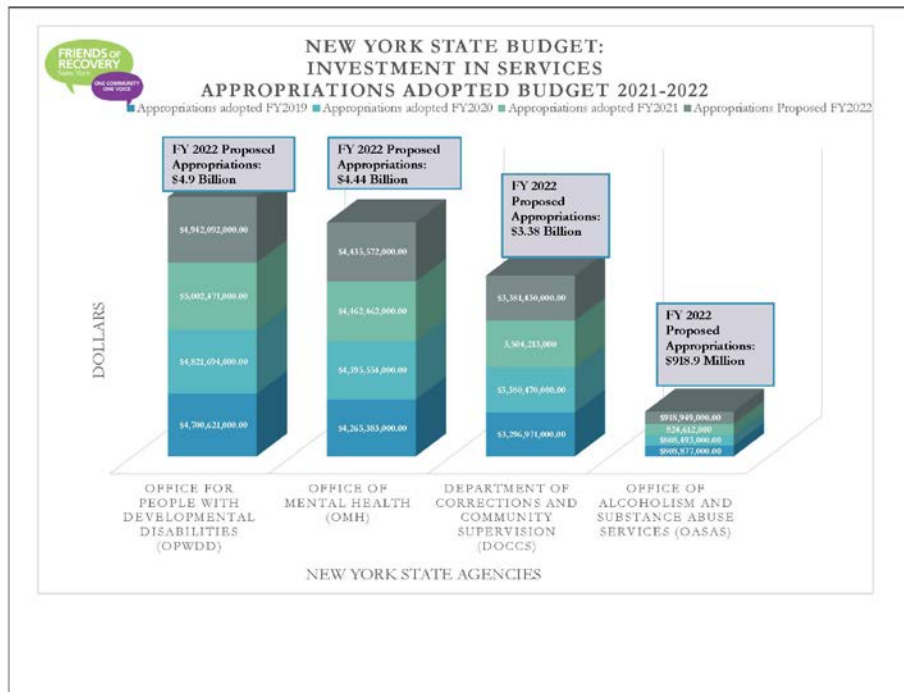
Year	Advocacy Efforts	Outcome
2015	Major advocacy campaigns by advocates in Long Island and Western NY	Funding for Friends of Recovery New York – over \$600,000 annually for 5 years for Leadership Development, Education and Training and Communications efforts
2016 - 17	Resulting community feedback generated by FOR-NY members received during the Heroin and Opiate Task Force listening tours conducted throughout the state in 2016.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establishment of Recovery Community and Outreach Centers- serving 16 counties • 18 Youth Clubhouses throughout the state • Peer Engagement Specialists serving 34 counties • Family Support Navigators serving 35 counties
2018	FOR-NY Advocacy Day with nearly 1000 participants as well as results from community forums around NYS and a Recovery Community Assets Survey and Report	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Passage of NYS Ombuds Program • \$200,000 Annually to Scholarship people with lived experience to become Certified Recovery Peer Advocates
2019	Over 1200 advocates attending	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recovery Tax Credit Program: \$2,000 per employer

	Stand Up For Recovery Day – the biggest statewide advocacy turn out yet	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Passage of Groundbreaking Mental Health Parity Package • Changing the name of OASAS to the Office of Addiction Supports and Services
2020	Over 1200 advocates attending Stand Up For Recovery Day again!	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Legislation passed to improve access to Medication Assisted Treatment (MAT) • Establishment of the Parity Compliance Fund and Parity Compliance Regulations • Removing Prior Authorization for MAT for private insurance carriers

Federal Money has also been strategically funneled through OASAS from the State Targeted Response to the Opioid Crisis Grants (2016-17) and the State Opioid Response (2017-18) which has helped to lift up communities including funding:

- Youth Voices Matter New York – over \$400,000 annually to lift up communities and build leadership in young people in recovery
- Funding for 15 additional Recovery Community and Outreach Centers
- Funding for 20 Centers of Treatment Innovation (COTIs) that provide mobile treatment, telehealth and transportation to bring services directly to individuals that need them.
- As well as funding for additional Recovery Community and Outreach Centers

In spite of many achievements, OASAS continues to be funded dismally compared to other agencies serving similar populations – OPWDD, OMH and DOCCS. Comparatively, OASAS’ budget is only 19% of these other budgets on average. We are hopeful that with the creation of a new agency, addiction and recovery services will be elevated in value financially, and not kept in the shadows. We seek for the recovery voice to be included in the programming and budgeting processes as this new agency develops.



We hope that any and all funding streams whether increased federal dollars, opioid litigation funds or through other tax revenue streams related to addictive substances or behaviors be allocated to prevention, treatment, recovery and harm reduction services. These funding streams could be exactly the ticket to filling the health gap for our vulnerable population, or they could become another band aid for a state budget. We ask the legislature and the executive branch to not mince words and put this funding where it belongs.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, [over 81,000 drug overdose deaths occurred](#) in the United States in the 12 months ending in May 2020. While we were grateful that reported statistics show a decrease in deaths due to opioid overdoses between the years 2017-2018, the COVID-19 Pandemic reversed much of that progress being made. Through recovery community surveys, we have learned (not by surprise) that the recovery community has struggled in connection during the COVID-19 pandemic. People in recovery must be at the table in responding to this public health crisis in all the decisions being made which impact our population exponentially.

On October 20, 2020 at the New York State Recovery Conference, we again conducted a point in time survey re-confirming the following top five identified priorities from our 2020 Policy Statement: #1 Housing; #2 Personalized Treatment and Treatment on Demand; #3 Recovery Oriented Systems of Care; and #4 Transportation. The survey also validated a policy position on racial justice as well as a public health response to COVID-19 which is inclusive of the Recovery Community. Below are our 2021 policy priorities as the recovery community of NYS. We call on the Governor and the NYS Legislature to take the following immediate actions to address the urgent addiction crisis in NYS:

1. **Racial Equity:** Support and expand on Governor’s proposed social justice reform initiatives including plan to establish a comprehensive crisis response services program. Support [S.679](#)

which establishes the council for treatment equity within the office of addiction services and supports;

2. **Housing:** Support [S.1416](#) regarding the certification of recovery living residences; Support Governor’s plan to ensure safe shelters and provide sustained care for homeless;
3. **Treatment on Demand** including harm reduction with recovery wrap around services and equitable access: Support [Governor’s expansion of telehealth](#); MAT in corrections: [A.0053](#); Ending prior-authorization for those who receive Medicaid insurance: [S.649](#). Support Governor’s proposal for hospital and criminal justice diversion, plan to integrate mental health and addiction services, with a focus on addiction recovery, and plan to protect New Yorkers with addiction and their families from predatory practices;
4. **Recovery Oriented Systems of Care:** Support [A.2466](#) and ensure all potential funding streams- Opioid Litigation dollars, federal stimulus dollars, and any other potential tax revenue goes to supporting prevention, treatment and recovery wrap around services;
5. **Transportation:** Support [S.1417](#) Establishing an addiction recovery supportive transportation services demonstration program.

Recovery is not just an individual or even a family issue or illness, it is a community issue. While recovery addresses many areas of concern as indicated in our survey, the top five issues that are most important to our community were identified as Racial Justice; Housing; Treatment; Recovery Oriented Systems of Care and Transportation and these are the areas we will be focusing on this budget and legislative session.

Thank you for your attention to this important issue and to the people you serve.

Recovery Services Offered and Needs Table

This table represents what is needed in New York State to ensure all communities, statewide have access to recovery-oriented systems of care.

Program	How Many Counties are funded	How Many Counties Need this?		Cost for community investment	Investment Needed
Recovery Community Organization	Only one is funded (LIRA)	61		\$150,000	\$9,150,000
Recovery Community Outreach Center	24	38	62	\$350,000	\$13,300,000
Recovery Youth Clubhouse	20	42	62	\$250,000	\$10,500,000
Peer Engagement Specialist (2 per county)	37	25	62	\$150,000	\$3,750,000
Family Support Navigators (2 per county)	39	23	62	\$100,000	\$2,300,000
Total Funding Needed					\$39,000,000

Thank you again for your consideration.