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Advocates Reinforce that Significant Funding Increases Are Needed in the FY2026 State Budget for Mental Health, Substance Use and IDD Services *Advocates to Host a Virtual Press Conference February 10, 2025 from 10:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m.*

NEW JERSEY: Recent and ongoing stressful situations locally, nationwide and across the world are having a substantial, negative impact on mental health for individuals of all ages. Though community-based services have been proven to be not only extremely impactful, but also cost-effective, funding continues to be insufficient and has resulted in reduced access due to high rates of staff turnover. The FY2026 State Budget must not only avoid funding cuts, but also include significantly increased funding for the behavioral healthcare and intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) systems for children, youth, adults and families to give all New Jersey residents the opportunities for wellbeing and success they deserve. To raise awareness of the tremendous impact of these services and secure Governor Phil Murphy and the State Legislature's support as they develop the budget, advocates from several behavioral health-focused organizations will hold a virtual press conference, *New Jerseyans Cannot Wait any Longer for Life-Affirming Care; Greater Investment Is Needed in Community Services*, on Monday, February 10, 2025 from 10:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m.

Behavioral healthcare services include mental health care, substance use treatment, support for managing the impact of IDD and services to address social determinants of health (housing, food, transportation, education, employment and access to physical and behavioral health care). All of these services are essential and have been proven to save lives and greatly enhance quality of life.

"The Arc of NJ is grateful for all of the previous investments from the Murphy Administration which have made a real and significant impact in the lives of thousands of individuals with IDD and their families. We urge the Governor to continue his strong support of those with IDD by refraining from any cuts that would jeopardize the services that this population depends on." Said Executive Director Thomas Baffuto. "Whether it's the waiting list, fee-for-service rates, camp rates for children with IDD, or new crisis beds, we implore the State to make enhanced investments if at all possible, and stay clear of reductions that will negatively affect so many individuals and families."

"We can't lose the groundbreaking policies and resources that children and adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities have gained through Governor Murphy's vision and leadership," emphasized Cathy Chin, Executive Director, Alliance for the Betterment of Citizens with Disabilities.

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“The New Jersey Association of Community Providers (NJACP) sincerely thanks Governor Murphy for his leadership in creating a more inclusive and supportive community for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) and their families. Continued investment is critical to ensuring that essential services remain accessible and badly needed expansion can occur. Without a sustainable system, New Jersey will be unable to meet the needs of almost 5,000 people waiting for services; individuals are at risk of isolation in expensive institutional care and having nowhere to go during the day, losing valuable skills; and the impact on family’s lives could be devastating. With threats to the IDD community on the federal and state levels, funding cuts risk undoing years of progress. We urge the state to prioritize funding for individuals with IDD to protect their rights, dignity, and quality of life,” stated Valerie Sellers, MHA, CHE, Chief Executive Officer.

“The New Jersey Alliance for Children Youth and Families is grateful for Governor Murphy and the Legislature’s prior support for youth mental health, but that investment must continue. The current mental health system in New Jersey for young people is imploding and children and their families are suffering,” said Megann Anderson Fischer, Executive Director, New Jersey Alliance for Children, Youth and Families (NJACYF). “New Jersey is experiencing an unprecedented demand for youth mental health assistance and there are not enough services to meet the need. Over 400 youth in New Jersey are on a waitlist for services each day. We are imploring Governor Murphy to include an 8% adjustment to youth mental health services in the Department of Children and Families FY26 budget to ensure current services are sustainable and to bring new services online. The Governor said in his State of the State address that the measure of a society is how it treats its children. The youth of our state and their families truly cannot wait any longer for life altering care.”

“The work of New Jersey’s Care Management Organizations, or CMOs, is very much in line with the mental health playbook that Governor Murphy unveiled at the National Governor’s Association in July of 2023. The CMOs agree with the governor’s statement that ‘Our kids deserve better, and we can do better.’ Let’s give our kids what they deserve by fully investing in the nationally recognized youth mental health model we have in New Jersey,” stated James Parauda, LSW, Chief Executive Officer, Tri County CMO.

“In addition to accessing federally matched funds, investing in the CMOs saves the state money by keeping youth in their homes and out of institutional care. Ninety-four percent of youth served by the CMO’s remain at home, in school and in their communities,” Parauda added.

“With the unprecedented levels of anxiety, depression, other mental illnesses, suicides and overdoses that continue to adversely affect the children, youth and adults of our State, mental health and substance use treatment and supports must be a top priority,” stressed Debra L. Wentz, PhD, President and CEO, New Jersey Association of Mental Health and Addiction Agencies (NJAMHAA). “Staff are carrying larger caseloads and greater responsibilities and, as a result, facing their own mental health, financial and work/life balance challenges. In addition, they recently had to take on additional administrative responsibilities required by the further integration of behavioral healthcare services into Medicaid managed care that began on January 1st. Community-based behavioral healthcare providers in New Jersey already operate on razor-thin margins. The additional demands imposed by the carve-in threaten this fragile balance.”

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“These investments are needed not only for individuals’ wellbeing and potential for success, but also the state’s bottom line, as community-based services prevent the need for much more costly emergency room visits, hospitalizations, incarcerations, and treatment for life-long comorbidities,” Dr. Wentz added.

To participate in this press conference, please click [here](#). (Meeting ID: 810 4603 7746; Passcode: 751381)

The Alliance for the Betterment of Citizens with Disabilities’ mission is to influence the development and implementation of public policy and to support our members in improving the lives of people with complex physical and neurological developmental disabilities so they can achieve their highest level of purpose and dignity.

The Arc of New Jersey promotes and protects the human rights of individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities and actively supports their full inclusion and participation in the community throughout their lifetimes; and is committed to enhancing the quality of life of those individuals and their families through advocacy, empowerment, education and prevention.

The New Jersey Alliance for Children, Youth and Families (NJACYF) is an advocacy organization representing child, youth and family serving organizations in every county in New Jersey. NJACYF is the voice of children, youth and families advancing holistic health and well-being. Its vision is for all children, youth, and families in New Jersey to have access to what they need to be healthy and thrive and its mission is to collaborate to shape practices and policies that drive excellence in care for children, youth, and families.

The New Jersey Association of Community Providers represents providers dedicated to advancing sustainable community-based services and supports that enrich lives and build futures for people with intellectual, developmental and other disabilities. Its mission is to assist member agencies as they provide quality supports and services for people with intellectual and other developmental disabilities.

The New Jersey Association of Mental Health and Addiction Agencies, Inc. (NJAMHAA) represents 164 organizations that annually serve more than 500,000 individuals in all of New Jersey’s diverse populations who have mental illness and/or substance use disorders, and their families. NJAMHAA members may be found in every county and every community statewide.

NJCMO is a collection of all 15 Care Management Organizations in New Jersey. It was formed to encourage collaboration and cooperation among all CMOs; educate the community on the role of the CMO and how we help youth and families; assist youth and families connect to needed resources; and provide a broader voice across the state for CMOs. NJCMOs provide services for mental health, substance abuse, developmental disabilities, court involvement and trouble in school.