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Res. No. 583

Resolution calling on New York State to subsidize the education and licensing costs of CUNY students who commit to working in the public sector in the mental health professions, which historically experience high turnover rates and staffing shortages.

By Council Members Joseph, Lee, Rivera, Powers, Louis, Restler, Hanif, Hudson, Ayala, Holden, Brewer, Ung, Abreu, Farías, Avilés, Sanchez, Nurse, Cabán, Brooks-Powers, Dinowitz and Ariola (in conjunction with the Brooklyn Borough President)

Whereas, In the United States (U.S.), one in five adults experiences mental illness annually; and

Whereas, Two in five incarcerated adults have a history of mental illness, while seven in 10 youth in the juvenile justice system have a mental health condition; and

Whereas, In New York State (State), over 2.8 million adults have a mental health condition, and over 4.1 million people live in a community with too few mental health professionals; and

Whereas, In the State last year, more than 1,700 died by suicide and over 550,000 adults had suicidal thoughts; and

Whereas, Over 90,000 people in the State are homeless, with one in six living with a serious mental illness; and

Whereas, In the State last year, about 60 percent of 12- to 17-year-olds who were diagnosed with depression did not receive any care; and

Whereas, According to the National Alliance on Mental Illness-New York State (NAMI-NYS), Governor Kathy Hochul's "$1 billion [2023-2023 budget] proposal represents the most significant commitment to mental health in the state's history"; and

Whereas, According to NAMI-NYS and an October 2022 study by a behavioral health advocacy group,

behavioral health agencies have a "revolving door of staff," with the number of new hires almost equaling the number of staff who are leaving, which means that providers are unable to sustain the staffing levels required to deliver needed services in many communities; and

Whereas, According to NAMI-NYS, "investing in programs without investing in the workforce is putting the cart before the horse and leaves the success of [new] programs in doubt"; and

Whereas, The National Alliance on Mental Illness-New York City Metro (NAMI-NYC) praised the New York City (NYC) Council for its Response to the Fiscal 2024 Preliminary Budget, in which it recognized the importance of expanding and supporting mental health services for NYC residents, including a commitment "to develop and retain the mental health workforce"; and

Whereas, A larger mental health workforce would be needed to staff the new programs being called for by Governor Hochul, by the City Council, and by Mayor Eric Adams in his "Care, Community, Action: A Mental Health Plan for New York City," announced in March 2023; and

Whereas, According to "Addressing the Lack of Diversity in the Mental Health Field," an article by Rebecca Kim published in March 2022 by the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI), the mental health workforce is predominantly white, even though people of color have a disproportionately higher rate of "adverse mental health outcomes and barriers to care"; and

Whereas, According to the Kim article, having a counselor, therapist, nurse, or other mental health professional with a different racial or ethnic identity can create difficulties for the person being treated; and

Whereas, The City University of New York (CUNY) has the right mix of students from all racial and ethnic backgrounds to draw from in developing a mental health workforce that can best serve all NYC communities, including those often underrepresented; and

Whereas, Providing subsidies to CUNY students to enter and persist in the mental health care field could improve the diversity of that workforce in NYC; now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Council of the City of New York calls on New York State to subsidize the education

and licensing costs of CUNY students who commit to working in the public sector in the mental health

professions, which historically experience high turnover rates and staffing shortages.

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RHP