

New Jersey Association of Mental Health and Addiction Agencies, Inc.
Innovating for Progress|Partnering for Solutions

**FY 2024
Board Members**

June 6, 2024

Chair

Jacques Hryshko, MS, LPC

Vice Chair

Anthony Comerford, PhD

Treasurer

Frank A. Ghinassi, PhD, ABPP

Secretary

Alan DeStefano, MSW

Immediate Past Chair

Susan Loughery, MBA

At-Large Members

Mary Gay Abbott-Young, LCADC

Mary Jo Buchanan, MPA, LCSW

Robert J. Budsock, MS, LCADC

Tara Chalakani, PsyD, LPC, RN

Anthony DiFabio, PsyD

Derry Holland, LCSW

Brigitte Johnson, Esq.

Erika Kerber, Esq.

Deborah Megaro, MBA

Kristine Pendency, LCSW

Louis A. Schwarcz, MA

Kathy White-Thomas, MS

Regina Widdows, MA

President and CEO

Debra L. Wentz, PhD

The Honorable Joseph F. Vitale, Chair
Senate Health, Human Services and Senior Citizens Committee
569 Rahway Ave.
Woodbridge, NJ 07095

Testimony on S1032

Dear Chairman Vitale and Members of the Senate Health, Human Services and Senior Citizens Committee:

On behalf of the New Jersey Association of Mental Health and Addiction Agencies (NJAMHAA) and its members, I thank you for this opportunity to provide testimony in regard to S1032 and offer NJAMHAA's special thanks to Senator Greenstein for having introduced this bill. The need to index rates and contracts for contracted providers of mental health and substance use treatment and supports, as well as services to those with intellectual and developmental disabilities, is long overdue.

Pre-COVID, community based behavioral health providers were already facing significant difficulties with recruitment and retention of qualified staff since the wages that community-based programs could afford to pay fell far short of those found in state positions, educational organizations, telehealth companies, health maintenance organizations, private practices and elsewhere.

Prior to the welcome and greatly appreciated investments in the FY2023 and FY2024 State budget, community based providers had received no cost of living increases in their rates and contracts since 2008. Following this long history of insufficient reimbursement, with no compensating for inflation, the recent investments have still left programs unable to compete in the labor marketplace. A March 2024 survey of NJAMHAA members reflected a 23% position vacancy rate which is affecting program capacity and access to care.

We cannot overstate how critical it is to the sustainability of community based behavioral health services to ensure that rates (State and Medicaid) and contracts are indexed for inflation.





New Jersey Association of Mental Health and Addiction Agencies, Inc.
Champions for Transforming Lives and Health Systems

In this time of increasing need, all New Jerseyans deserve access to quality, timely behavioral health services. Toward that end, we respectfully urge all members of the Committee to vote yes on S1032.

Sincerely,

Debra L. Wentz, Ph.D.
President and CEO