

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

November 29, 2023

**FY 2024**

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The Honorable Sarah Adelman  
Commissioner  
Department of Human Services  
P.O. Box 700  
Trenton, NJ 08625-0700

Dear Commissioner Adelman,

Thank you for this opportunity to share the New Jersey Association of Mental Health and Addiction Agencies' (NJAMHAA's) recommendations for the FY 2025 State Budget. NJAMHAA and its members greatly appreciate the noteworthy increases to rates and contracts included in the FY2023 and FY2024 budgets, yet recognize that significant additional investments are required to enable the community-based providers serving New Jersey's most vulnerable populations to build and sustain a stable, qualified workforce.

As unprecedented numbers of children, youth and adults continue to experience anxiety, depression and other disorders, and with greater acuity, our suicide and opioid epidemics continue with great loss of life. Staff continue to carry larger caseloads and more responsibilities due to workforce shortages while recruitment and retention at community-based programs remain most difficult because providers simply cannot compete in the current marketplace.

In 2022, NJAMHAA presented to you our *Diverse Faces, Many Lives* campaign illustrating the profound, powerful, positive effects behavioral health services have on individuals' lives. In 2023 we shared our *Diverse Faces, Partners in Care* campaign, which highlighted how each successful recovery story includes a clinician, counselor, peer, case manager or other staff whom an individual connected with, opened up to, and trusted to help them on their path to recovery. In the coming weeks, we will introduce *Diverse Faces, All Are Worthy of Full Investment*. It will continue to highlight the life-saving work of behavioral health staff and the need for more investment to ensure all New Jersey's diverse populations have access to the services they deserve.

Unfortunately, so many individuals in our diverse communities do not have access to the services that have provided others the opportunity to achieve physical and mental well-being, as the capacity of the current system is limited by the workforce it employs, a workforce marked by unprecedented vacancies.





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

To ensure access to appropriate behavioral health services for all of our diverse vulnerable populations, reimbursement rates and contracts for mental health and substance use treatment and support services need to be increased to match the cost of care. Most importantly, increases must allow for competitive wages to be paid so the Partners in Care needed by the individuals served can be recruited and retained.

NJAMHAA makes the following recommendations for the FY2025 budget to stabilize and strengthen the behavioral health workforce so they will be available to serve every New Jerseyan – all of whom are worthy of these needed investments:

- Invest \$60 million (state and federal funds) in rates and contracts to enable providers to offer wages that are more competitive.
- Invest \$5 million in incentives for community-based organizations to become field placement sites and provide clinical supervision of interns.
- Invest \$5 million for recruitment and retention bonuses for behavioral health staff.
- Provide \$20 million as an initial capital investment into facilities so behavioral health providers can further develop integrated care and do necessary repairs and improvements.

The bottom line for the diverse children, youth and adults in need of services is that access to care requires a qualified, stable workforce to be able to deliver timely, appropriate mental health and substance use treatment and supports. We ask that the FY2025 budget provide the significant investment in community-based behavioral health care that is needed to meet that goal and not leave out any of New Jersey's diverse residents in need of behavioral healthcare, all of whom are worthy of such investment.

Thank you for considering our recommendations and for your continued advocacy and other efforts to ensure access to high-quality mental healthcare and substance use treatment services for all New Jersey residents.

If you need additional information, please do not hesitate to contact me at 609-838-5488, ext. 292, or [dwentz@njamhaa.org](mailto:dwentz@njamhaa.org).

Sincerely,

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