

Strong Nonprofits for a Better New York

Talking Points – Human Services Cost-Of-Living Adjustment



Who we are

- *[Your organization]* is a member of the Strong Nonprofits for a Better New York Campaign.
- We are one of more than 350 nonprofit human services providers from across the State that have come together to call on the State to make key investments to strengthen the human services sector.
- Human services are the foundation of our communities, providing critical interventions to constituents, including after-school programs, supportive housing, job training, community centers, and more.

Key Points:

- For 8 of the last 10 years, Governor Cuomo has deferred the statutory cost-of-living adjustment for nonprofit human services employees, withholding over an estimated \$707 million from human services employees.
- We are calling on Governor Cuomo to keep the statutory COLA in this year's state budget.
- This COLA encompasses the entire human services sector, including organizations contracting with the following State agencies: OTDA, OCFS, DOL, DHCR, DHR, NCS, OWIG, OMH, OPWDD, OASAS, DDPC, CQCAPD, DOH, NYSOFA
- Human services providers have a skilled, highly educated workforce, and struggle to pay them a livable wage—to the extent that their employees are often eligible for the same benefits as the clients they serve.
- By removing the statutory COLA from the budget, the state not only devalues the crucial work that this workforce does, but also undermines their ability to effectively deliver necessary services, meet current community needs, and plan for future needs.
- Underfunding human services is an equity and racial disparity issue: the nonprofit human services workforce is 81% female and 46% women of color.
- *[Discuss how low wages impact your organization: How many people do you employ? How has not being able to give your employees a COLA impacted salaries, morale, retention/turnover?]*

Background

- Human services nonprofits provide vital services to the public, including *[discuss the services provided by your organization]*.
- Nonprofit human services providers are integral to our communities. We need support from the Legislature to ensure that our services remain intact and we can sustain our programs throughout the State.
- A statutory COLA for human services providers with state agency contracts exists in the state budget, but is consistently taken out. Deferring the human services COLA means that human services contracts have not seen a salary increase in 8 of the last 10 years, totaling well over half a billion dollars in withheld salary adjustments.
- Without adjusting contracts to account for any increases to the cost of doing business, services cannot be fully operational. This greatly impacts the health and well-being of New Yorkers.
- The state should not be creating savings on the backs of the nonprofit workforce serving our communities.
- Low pay results in a crisis of recruitment and retention: turnover at some human services providers is as high as 40%, and 34% of providers note poor retention of direct services staff, disrupting the quality of services they are able to provide to clients.
- In 2017, the State invested \$55 million in direct care workers (those contracted through OPWDD, OMH, or OASAS). While we support this increase, it left out many human services workers, including those contracted through state agencies like OCFS, OTDA, and NYSOFA.
- *If, in your meetings with legislators, you are asked about the campaign's combined asks:* please note that the cost of implementation of human services cost-of-living adjustments (\$140 million) and \$15 minimum wage funding (\$25 million) is less than the sum of both, as there is some overlap in the employee beneficiaries of said funding.