

Faith Leaders for “Bring It Home: Better Funding for Better Mental Health Care”

January 2018

Honorable Andrew M. Cuomo
Governor of the State of New York
NYS Capitol Building
Albany, NY 12224
New York, NY 10007

Dear Governor Cuomo:

As Faith Leaders from diverse faith traditions throughout New York State, in this holy season for many, we join the Interfaith Assembly on Homelessness and Housing and more than 100 state and local organizations to express our support for the “Bring it Home Campaign” to urge you to commit adequate funding in the New York State Budget to preserve and strengthen the existing system of nearly 40,000 Mental Health Housing units operated by non-profit agencies under the auspices of the NYS Office of Mental Health.

As we commend and celebrate the State’s recent and historic commitment of 20,000 new units of supportive housing over the next 15 years, we are dismayed to note that the existing system of mental health housing is on the brink of financial disaster, with many providers now thinking the unthinkable, that they will shutter units of housing putting thousands of New Yorkers at risk due to over two decades of severely and increasingly inadequate reimbursement rates. With 40,000 currently operating units of mental health housing, no other state has the numbers, breadth, and depth of housing choices that New York has for people with psychiatric disabilities, but the state has not kept its promise to fund them adequately. For more than 25 years the State has failed to provide adequate funding to effectively manage the ongoing and growing challenges that providers face every day. If the state does meet its moral obligation to protect this critical system by providing adequate support for people with serious psychiatric disabilities, who often have significant medical conditions and substance abuse issues as well, the state risks seeing some of our most vulnerable people end up back on our streets.

At the very heart of each of our faith traditions is the call to stand with the most vulnerable members of our human family. In fact, the early mental health residential programs in New York were founded in the early 1970s by faith based organizations and clergy, including Unity House of Troy, Hospitality House in Albany, Transitional Services in Syracuse and St. Francis Friends of the Poor in NYC, and many more.

We support the BRING IT HOME: Better Funding for Better Care Campaign, which is calling on the state to add funding to the existing system in the form of rate increases that will truly stabilize the existing mental health housing system ensuring that more New Yorkers are not hospitalized unnecessarily, jailed or imprisoned, or left to start their recovery again and again because the providers are unable to deliver consistent staffing and services. An investment into these housing programs now will ensure that these invaluable resources are not badly compromised or, worse, start to disappear resulting in a disaster for our most vulnerable families.

We look forward to hearing from you as to what your administration will do regarding this most important of issues.

In Faith,