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Community Healthcare Organizations Urge Immediate Action on Bills Assuring a Set Aside of Funds from Healthcare Investment Account

ALBANY – Advocates representing twenty-one primary care, mental health, substance use disorder and developmental disorder provider associations were joined today by Assembly Health Chair Richard Gottfried and Senate Health Chair Gustavo Rivera urging legislation (**A.7977A/S.6376**) assuring that a minimum dedicated share of funds is allocated to community-based providers from an existing pool known as the Health Care Transformation Fund (HCTF).

HCTF was enacted as part of the state fiscal year 2018-19 budget. It requires funds to be used “to support care delivery, including for capital investment, debt retirement or restructuring, housing and other social determinants of health, or transitional operating support to health care providers.”

Earlier this year, \$675 million of the HCTF funds were used for a Medicaid rate increase to hospitals and nursing homes across New York; but no such funding has yet been dedicated to community care providers at a time when the state otherwise relies on these organizations to keep patients out of costlier settings and provide essential community supports in line with the fund’s stated purpose.

The organizations gathered today represent the front line in care and services for individuals with developmental disabilities, the elderly, persons battling substance use disorder or mental health issues, and primary care needs. They are calling for **at least 25 percent of future funds in the HCTF account to be invested in the post-acute care system** that prevents unnecessary hospital use and directly addresses social determinants of health in the community.

Assemblyman Richard Gottfried, Chair of the Assembly Health Committee and primary sponsor of A7977A said the following: “Community-based health care providers are the cornerstone of our health care delivery system. We depend on the people who provide primary care, behavioral and mental health treatment, services for people with developmental disabilities, home care, and many other services. Workforce shortages are straining these providers and threatening access to services. The Health Care Transformation Fund was established to support health care delivery, and supporting community-based health care providers is a key part of that.”

Lauri Cole, Executive Director of the NYS Council for Community Behavioral Healthcare, a statewide membership association representing 105 mental health and substance use disorder/addiction care providers across New York said the following: "While it continues to increase its demands on community providers, the state has not provided investments in league with those demands. Community-based providers are operating on a wafer-thin financial base at the same time that they are depended upon to decrease hospital readmission rates, divert non-acute patients from the ER, and increase access to care for children and adults in communities reeling from the impact of two simultaneous public health crises: the opioid epidemic and rising suicide rates. The advocates standing with me today represent community organizations doing all of this – and much more – while dealing with crisis-level staff turnover rates, skyrocketing operating expenses and Medicaid managed care companies that often fail to pay claims for months on end. Future disbursements of funds from the Healthcare Transformation Fund account must be distributed across all areas of the state's healthcare delivery system" said Cole.

Home Care Association of New York State (HCA) President and CEO Al Cardillo said: "This legislation would provide New York's home care providers with access to critical, long-needed investments for fulfilling the state's major healthcare goals, be it managing critical community-based care and transition for the medically needy, addressing disparities, supporting the state's public health agenda, or reducing avoidable hospital use. We are proud to stand with our legislative champions and this broad coalition to resolve a longstanding absence of investment into home and community care, leveraging an already existing pool of resources. We face major financial pressures and costly labor shortages, leaving little-to-no working capital for investments in our sector that would provide dividends for New York's health care system. A.7977A/S.6376 provides a vital stimulus in the right direction, equipping home care and other community care providers for population health, patient-centered care, and substantial cost-savings."

"We are extremely grateful to Senator Rivera, Assemblyman Gottfried and all of S.6376/A.7977-A's sponsors. This legislation will provide critical funding to community-based organizations making it possible for them to provide quality supports and services which are needed to ensure people with intellectual and developmental disabilities can obtain full integration and achieve independence in their communities," said Susan Constantino, President & CEO of Cerebral Palsy Associations of New York State. "We urge the Assembly and the Senate to pass the bill before the end of the current legislative session and Governor Cuomo to sign it into law as soon as it reaches his desk."

Community Health Care Association President and CEO Rose Duhan said, "Community Health Centers are the only Statewide network of providers who offer high-quality, comprehensive primary and preventive care to any New Yorker who needs it, regardless of whether they have insurance or can afford it to pay. We are grateful to Assemblyman Gottfried and Senator Rivera for putting forth bills and doing their part to

ensure that funding is set aside for us and all community-based providers. The care we provide saves the state money by keeping people healthy and out of hospitals – a worthwhile investment in New York’s future. We demand action on this proposed legislation before the session ends.”

"The evidence is clear that patient access to high quality primary care both improves patient health and outcomes and reduces health care costs by avoiding more expensive inpatient and institutional care," said Barbara Keber, MD, President, NYS Academy of Family Physicians. "The Health Care Transformation Fund was created to help support care delivery and address social determinants of health, among other purposes. The State must ensure that this health resource is made available not just to hospitals and nursing homes but also to community-based providers, across disciplines and settings. We urge the Legislature to pass A.7977-A/S.6376, which earmarks at least 25% of this fund for community-based providers, before the 2019 session ends this week."

“The community not for profit workforce is dedicated to helping people in great need recover and move forward in their lives. This workforce has a great passion for helping people but passion and hard work alone do not pay the bills. That is why we support Assemblyman Gottfried and Senator Rivera for their leadership in supporting a carve out of the Health Care Transformation fund for community not for profits” said Glenn Liebman, CEO of the Mental Health Association in NYS.

Doug Cooper, Associate Executive Director of the Association for Community Living said, “Community based providers, who offer many of the most cost effective and necessary services in health care, have been left out of many of the initiatives that NYS has undertaken in recent years. Having access to the Health Care Transformation Account would provide needed resources for these vital services.”

“The community care sector is vital to the health and vitality of New York’s health care delivery system. Investing in services provided at home and services provided in our communities bends the cost curve, delivers great clinical/social/behavioral outcomes and comes with the highest levels of consumer satisfaction. That is why we are asking for a share of the Healthcare Transformation Fund,” said Carla Braverman, Executive Director, Hospice and Palliative Care Association of New York State.

“The County Mental Health Commissioners strongly believe that a sound investment in community-based behavioral health services is essential in order for the State to meet its goals of reducing emergency room visits and hospital readmissions. This legislation is critical to the viability of these services and will facilitate access by the State’s most vulnerable members of our communities, said Kelly Hansen, Executive Director of the NYS Conference of Local Mental Hygiene Directors.

