



**Written Testimony
NYS Joint Legislative Budget Hearing on Human Services
Tuesday, February 9, 2021**

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On behalf of Urban Pathways, thank you to Chair Persaud, Chair Rosenthal, and members of the Committees for the opportunity to submit testimony on the needs of human services in the New York State 2021-2022 State Budget.

Urban Pathways is a New York City-based nonprofit homeless services and supportive housing provider, serving four out of the five boroughs. We assist individuals through a unique combination of street outreach, drop-in services, Safe Havens, and extended-stay and permanent supportive housing residences, which operate 24/7. We also offer a wide range of additional programming to meet the needs of our clients, including our Total Wellness Program that connects clients with Primary Care Physicians among other health education, which has become more critical than ever this past year. Last year, Urban Pathways served approximately 3,900 New Yorkers in need. Of those who received comprehensive services (about 1,800), 79% have a disabling condition.

Our programs also provide many jobs to the community. Urban Pathways employs 360 people, most of whom are frontline workers providing critical maintenance, security, and food services in our facilities. **Throughout the course of this pandemic, our programs have remained fully operational thanks to these dedicated frontline staff members that have continued to work on-site to ensure the health and safety of our clients.** Their commitment and dedication to those we serve have been nothing short of heroic, as have the actions of those providing essential human services across the state. Unfortunately, human services workers have been recognized as essential by the State in name only.

We implore the State to **recognize human services as essential in this year's budget by providing emergency pay for their hours worked on-site during the pandemic.** This is also an issue of equity. At Urban Pathways, 66% of our employees identify as Black and 23% identify as Hispanic/ Latinx. Across the NYS human services sector, 80% are women and 44% are women of color. Our workforce is not only serving but are also members of

the communities hardest hit by COVID-19, and they deserve proper compensation to support themselves and their families in these challenging times.

Prior to the pandemic, the human services workforce has been among some of the lowest paid workers in NYS, despite the difficult work they do each day. This leads to high staff turnover rates, which creates a drain on resources to constantly hire and train new staff members and creates inconsistencies for the clients we serve. Minimum wage is simply not enough to retain staff.

We also urge NYS to **raise revenue responsibly in order to avoid cuts to the human services sector**. Nonprofit human services have been consistently underfunded and are often the first programs to be cut, despite the critical services they provide. Housing programs funded under the New York State Office of Mental Health, such as the licensed and unlicensed supportive housing programs Urban Pathways operates, alone face a \$180 million shortfall statewide between the actual costs to run these programs effectively and our contract levels. On top of this, **nonprofit providers have incurred extensive costs related to the COVID-19 pandemic**, in order to purchase PPE, provide technology access to staff and clients to work and receive services remotely, and increase cleaning and sanitization throughout our buildings.

In order to responsibly raise revenue, we support the [Invest in Our New York Act](#), which includes six ways to address the State's budget shortfall, such as the Billionaires' Tax and Corporate Tax. The State must honor its partnership with the human services sector that provides critical services under state contracts. To ensure the fiscal health of providers is to ensure that New Yorkers can continue to get the services they rely on. Human service providers have been at the front lines of the pandemic and will continue to be critical to New York's recovery.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide this testimony.

For questions or further information, please contact:

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