



Joint Legislative Hearing on Fiscal Year 2022-23 Executive Budget Proposal
Human Services
February 2, 2022

Introduction and Thanks:

My name is Patrick Boyle, and I am the Assistant Vice President for Public Policy at Volunteers of America-Greater New York (VOA-GNY). We are the local affiliate of the national organization, Volunteers of America, Inc. (VOA). I would like to thank the Chairs and the Legislature for the opportunity to submit the following testimony.

About Us:

VOA-GNY is an anti-poverty organization that aims to end homelessness in Greater New York by 2050 through housing, health and wealth building services. We are one of the region's largest human service providers, impacting more than 11,000 adults and children annually through 65 programs in New York City, Northern New Jersey, and Westchester. We are also an active nonprofit developer of supportive and affordable housing, with a robust portfolio of award-winning permanent supportive housing, affordable and senior housing properties, transitional shelters and Single Room Occupancy (SRO) residences—with more in the pipeline.

Funding and Policy Items:

We would like to highlight a few areas of the Executive Budget that would have a tremendous impact for both our clients and our staff.

- **Cost of Living Increase (COLA)** – We thank the governor for her leadership on pledging \$500 million for COLA for nonprofit human service workers across the State, and strongly urge the Legislature to maintain this item throughout the budget process. VOA-GNY is proud to have a staff of over 1,200 hardworking individuals, the majority of whom are funded through government contracts at the local, state and federal levels. These members of our team work every day to make transformational change in the lives of our clients. Frankly, they are paid far too little for this work as compared to similar non-contracted or direct government roles. This leads to morale issues as well as high turnover rates. This COLA funding is long overdue and, although just one step of many needed to bring true pay equity to this sector, it is an absolutely necessity in order for VOA-GNY and organizations like it to continue the work that we do.
- **\$40.7 Million Minimum Wage Increase** – Particularly in the high-cost region of New York City and Westchester, minimum wage is often not sufficient to meet living costs. A minimum wage increase for our programs that are licensed, certified or authorized by

OPWDD, OMH and OASAS would have a positive impact for those on our team who need it most. Again we strongly urge ultimate passage of this item in the final budget.

- **Nonprofit Infrastructure Capital Improvement Program** – This program is a potential lifeline to organizations like VOA-GNY, with an aging housing portfolio, programs in need of space expansion, and other investment opportunities to improve and streamline the work of our team. In many instances, our imagination for our programs goes farther than budget realities allow. This funding helps. We strongly support the allocated amount.
- **Public Assistance Changes** – The “benefits cliff” is a policy consequence experienced by our clients and our caseworker staff regularly. The proposed changes in this budget, particularly maintaining eligibility with increased earnings and savings as well as elimination of the 45-day waiting period, would help to alleviate this issue.

On behalf of VOA-Greater New York, I would like to thank the Chairs and all the members present for the opportunity to read this testimony into the record. We are grateful for the leadership of the Governor, the Senate and Assembly on these important issues and urge that the human services sector and New Yorkers in need be front of mine as this budget is reconciled.

Respectfully submitted by:

Volunteers of America - Greater New York
135 West 50th Street, 9th Floor
New York, NY 10020