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HSC Memo on New York State's Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic and Community-Based Organizations

The Human Services Council is working with our 170 members and partners across the State to respond to COVID-19 concerns in our community, and appreciate all the work the State is doing to react. In this time of crisis, human services organizations are attempting to adapt services to an evolving situation, supporting staff and clients who are concerned about the spread of the virus, and arming them with facts. This pandemic has placed, and will continue to place, significant strain on our State's social safety net. It is essential that our partners in government make every accommodation possible to community-based organizations to facilitate their response on the ground in neighborhoods across the state.

The COVID-19 outbreak underscores now more than ever the need for a strong paid sick leave program in New York State. HSC is a strong supporter of paid sick time. Our members want to afford their employees every consideration and accommodation so that they can keep themselves and their families healthy, which in turn will help keep the people they serve healthy. Any paid sick leave legislation that the State considers must:

- **Reimburse providers operating human services contracts for paid sick time.** Nonprofit human services providers likely will not be able to draw down on other sources of revenue to cover paid sick time for their employees. Legislation must include funds to support these organizations.
- **Include full-time and part-time employees.** Many nonprofits rely on part-time employees to operate programs like after-school. Paid sick legislation must encompass both full- and part-time staff in the event of illness.
- **Ensure that paid sick leave is extended to employees who are voluntarily quarantining themselves or are directed to be quarantined by a health care practitioner.** At this point, with the lack of COVID-19 testing across the country, many individuals are choosing to quarantine themselves out of caution after exposures to individuals who may be infected with the virus, even if they were not instructed to do so by a medical professional (or were not able to connect with a medical professional due to strain on the system). It is important that this be addressed in legislation so that human services workers know that they will be compensated in the event of a voluntary quarantine.

We are also concerned with what this pandemic will mean for deliverables on state human service contracts, and what will happen if community-based organizations are unable to carry out program activities due to the COVID-19 outbreak. We urge the State to uphold full contract reimbursement obligations in the event that programs or services are modified or suspended due to COVID-19 concerns.

For more information, please contact Gabriela Andrade, Policy and Organizing Strategist at andrdeg@humanservicescouncil.org or (212) 836-1585.

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