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HUMAN SERVICES COUNCIL APPLAUDS HOCHUL'S PLEDGE TO BOOST WAGES FOR NONPROFIT WORKERS

***COLA would be first pay increase in more than a decade, marks sharp departure from
prior administration***

NEW YORK – The Human Services Council (HSC) today applauded Governor Kathy Hochul for pledging \$500 million in funding for human services cost-of-living adjustments (COLAs) in her first State of the State address. This investment will help upwards of 800,000 workers across the state, along with the thousands of nonprofit human services providers that are critical to New York's post-pandemic recovery.

Importantly, this investment signals a major departure from the prior administration. For every year of his tenure, former Governor Cuomo robbed State-contracted human services workers of their mandated statutory COLA, depriving these workers of over \$700 million in raises, and balancing the budget on the backs of low-wage workers and nonprofit community organizations.

The nonprofit human services workforce delivers critical services on behalf of the government, including operating homeless and domestic violence shelters, caring for foster children, running food pantries and performing other essential services. The human services workforce is always essential, but never was that more clear than during the pandemic when millions of New Yorkers were in need of lifesaving services, provided by these workers.

Despite the clear importance of the services they provide, human services employees are some of the lowest paid workers in the state due to underfunded government contracts. This is a key issue of equity as the workforce is overwhelmingly female (66%), over two-thirds (68%) are full-time workers of color, and nearly half (46%) are women of color. They are paid, on average, 70% of what their government counterparts make, and are long overdue for equitable wages.

HSC and the Strong Nonprofits campaign are pushing for equitable wages for all human services workers as part of the [#JustPay Campaign](#). This cost-of-living adjustment is one of three key initiatives the campaign is advocating for in order to turn the tide on government sanctioned poverty wages.

“Governor Hochul is making clear that she values the role human services workers play in lifting up all New Yorkers and that she is committed to addressing this long-standing problem. To have a partner in the Governor after being left out of crucial economic development and equity

conversations for so long is a welcome shift. We look forward to our continued partnership in achieving equitable wages for human services workers as part of our #JustPay campaign.” - **Michelle Jackson, Executive Director, Human Services Council**

“Governor Hochul is showing up for our communities and our workers by making this important and historic investment. It is a breath of fresh air to this critical workforce that has been fighting on the frontlines of the pandemic, while only earning poverty-level wages through their government contracts. An investment of a 5.4% COLA will help us turn the tide on low wages and is a critical step in achieving equity for our workforce.” - **Glenn Liebman, CEO, Mental Health Association in New York State (MHANYS)**

“We often heard that the State was serious about supporting those who serve willingly and sacrificially on the frontlines and that the State was serious about equity, but those words never translated into action. Our underinvested communities, the women of color and people who serve did not see investments. This desperately needed investment is long overdue and it is a sign that real change has finally come to Albany. This workforce is essential for New York’s COVID-19 recovery and this boost will help ensure we can retain committed and talented workers at this critical moment.” - **Jeremy Christopher Kohomban, Ph.D. President and Chief , Executive Officer, The Children's Village**

“Northern Rivers joins our colleagues throughout the human services sector in appreciation of the recognition of our hard work, sacrifice, and importance to the health and safety of our great state in Governor Kathy Hochul’s first State of the State Address. We are encouraged to learn about her stated commitment to investing in Cost of Living Adjustments (COLA) for our sector along with retention bonuses for these essential workers, to encourage our best and brightest to seek and commit to careers in our industry, and to continue to leverage innovations like telehealth to better serve our communities. We will continue to passionately advocate for significant, ongoing investment in mental health services, child welfare, family-supporting programs, special education, and the many other vital supports that the nonprofit human services sector provides to millions of New Yorkers. We look forward to reviewing the governor’s first state budget proposal and to working with her team and the Legislature on behalf of our communities.” - **William Gettman CEO, Northern Rivers Family of Services**

“We are grateful to Governor Hochul for recognizing the importance of the human services workforce through her inclusion of a COLA in the state budget. As a workforce that was defined as essential during the early stages of the pandemic and throughout, the Governor's actions put some meaning behind the words. This COLA is critical to the financial stability of the workforce and the sector, the majority of whom are people of color and significantly female. This COLA is long overdue, and we thank the Governor for her support of the sector and its workforce.” - **Dr. Damyn Kelly, President and CEO, Lutheran Social Services of NY.**

“The Human Services Leadership Council of Central New York joins its partners in the Strong Nonprofits Campaign and the HSC in thanking Governor Hochul for her leadership. This COLA increase is an important first step in recognizing the essential work of the nonprofit human

services workforce and moving toward the wage equity that is essential for New York State to thrive.” - **Loretta Zolkowski, Executive Director, Human Services Leadership Council**

“I and the Urban Pathways community were thrilled to see the human services cost-of-living adjustment included in the State of the State address and thank Governor Hochul for including this critical need amongst her budget priorities. Our dedicated staff provide essential services to those experiencing homelessness and living with mental health disorders 24/7 at residential programs, including at the height of the pandemic. The COLA is an imperative step towards racial justice by improving wages for our historically underpaid and undervalued human services workforce, and we look forward to a continued partnership with the Governor to ensure continued movement towards equitable wages for our state-contracted workers.” - **Frederick Shack, LMSW, Chief Executive Officer of Urban Pathways**

“The Center for Community Alternatives colleague nonprofits serving thousands of New Yorkers in Rochester, Syracuse, New York City and across the State are overjoyed that the heroic work they do in communities every day is finally being recognized, and that the long overdue inclusion of a cost-of-living adjustment is a first step toward real #JustPay for human services workers.” - **David Condliffe, Esq., Executive Director, Center for Community Alternatives**

"NMIC applauds Governor Hochul for pledging \$500 million in funding for human services cost-of-living adjustments (COLAs). Investing in the human services sector, means investing in communities and the recovery of New York State. Thank you for recognizing the value of the sector and our workforce." - **Maria Lizardo, NMIC Executive Director**

“Leadership starts at the top - and we are incredibly heartened by our Governor’s acknowledgment of the hard working individuals who toil ceaselessly to ensure the safety, and wellbeing of our states most vulnerable - the employees of the Human Services Sector.” - **Thomas Krever, Principle, K3C Consulting, Coaching and Company**

"On behalf of BronxWorks and our fellow nonprofit colleagues throughout New York City, I am pleased and encouraged by Governor Hochul’s pledge of \$500 million to support COLAs for human services and nonprofit workers. Organizations like BronxWorks provide not only a safety-net for our city’s residents during this most critical time, but also future-oriented services that seek to break the cycle of poverty that our residents face and build a better future for the Bronx. Throughout this pandemic, BronxWorks staff have remained at the forefront of the crisis, at every turn and new challenge, risking their own safety to meet Bronx residents in their greatest time of need. We continue to provide crucial services such as emergency food assistance; afterschool, summer camp, and student support programs; workforce development; street homeless outreach, homeless shelters and supportive housing; community health advocacy, including food and nutrition education, vaccine equity, and COVID-19 safety information; and so much more. All of this work is incredibly important and as essential workers, our staff deserve to be fairly-compensated. Years of not providing regular COLAs has left our essential workforce severely under-compensated." - **Eileen Torres, Executive Director, BronxWorks, Inc.**

“Thank you Governor Hochul for prioritizing human service workers with this \$500 million dollar

investment towards COLA. Throughout the last two years of this pandemic, human service workers have been here day in and day out, providing essential work in supporting New York's vulnerable populations during these difficult times. As we contend with another variant, the human services sector is the social safety-net that keeps communities afloat with critical programs such as meal assistance, senior services, and affordable housing programs, just to name a few. We are glad to see New York acknowledge the hard work of our friends and colleagues, and we look forward to continuing working alongside the State in helping our communities recover from this devastating pandemic." - **Gregory J. Morris, President and Executive Director of the Stanley Isaacs Neighborhood Center.**

"United Neighborhood Houses applauds Governor Kathy Hochul for doing the right thing and investing \$500 million in funding for a cost of living adjustment for human service workers. Settlement house workers supported their neighbors and clients throughout the hardest moments of this pandemic, and settlement houses continue to run essential programs to make sure that families are housed and employed, children are healthy and educated, and older people are cared for and engaged. The Governor's promised investment recognizes their essential work and is a strong first step to support human services in New York State." - **Susan Stamler, Executive Director, United Neighborhood Houses**

"We applaud Governor Hochul's commitment to invest \$500 million for Cost of Living Adjustments (COLAs) to help raise wages for human services workers. It is a clear, much-appreciated signal that the Governor values our Human Services workers who have been on the front lines of the pandemic. Essential workers in our child welfare programs support New York's children and families tirelessly each day—assisting families with getting vaccinated and boosted, caring for children and youth in foster care, helping secure much-needed PPE, supports, and services for families across New York. We look forward to working with the Governor and her team in building on this commitment to support our dedicated workforce, essential staff that ensure child safety and well-being every day." - **Kathleen Brady-Stepien, President & CEO, COFCCA**

"Human service nonprofits have played an invaluable role helping the most vulnerable New Yorkers on their feet during the ongoing public health crisis. We commend Governor Hochul for investing in the nonprofit human services workforce to better serve New York's recovery." - **Scott Short, CEO of RiseBoro Community Partnership**

"URI applauds Governor Hochul and her administration for investing in the tireless work of social services employees with a well-deserved and overdue cost of living adjustment. The dedication and everyday actions of our staff, especially over the last two years, have been nothing short of heroic. We are pleased that there will be compensation that begins to recognize and appreciate the live-saving work of our incredible teams." - **Nathaniel Fields, Chief Executive Officer of Urban Resource Institute (URI)**

"I am encouraged by the Governor's commitment to the human services sector and for the recognition of the critical role human services workers provide to New Yorkers. We are grateful for the long overdue COLA for nonprofit workers who provide essential services to children, families, adults and communities, and represents a first step in addressing equity for the workforce." - **Keith Little, President & CEO, SCO Family of Services**

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About HSC

The Human Services Council of New York, a leading advocate for nonprofits providing human services, works to strengthen the ability of nonprofit agencies to maximize human potential in communities across New York. Nearly 200 nonprofit organizations throughout New York City and State are HSC members. Visit HSC at www.HumanServicesCouncil.org.