



Mary E. Sullivan
President

Denise Berkley
Executive Vice President

Richard Bebo
Secretary

Nicole Meeks
Treasurer

Stay Union ★ Stay Strong

February 9, 2021

Dear Assemblymember:

I write today to ask for your support in stopping the devastating cuts proposed for the Office of Mental Health (OMH) in this year's executive budget. These cuts represent a lack of acknowledgment and foresight on the part of the Executive and Commissioner of OMH of the devastating effects of bed reductions and closures for our neediest citizens.

Specifically, this budget would eliminate another 200 inpatient psychiatric beds across the state. In addition, Rockland Children's Psychiatric Center would move all their inpatient beds to the Bronx, leaving an area from the Bronx to Utica with no access to children's psychiatric beds. Families would be further away from their children at a time when family support is most important.

Since 2014, the state has eliminated over 30% of in-patient children's psychiatric beds across the state as well as 20% of adult beds. This year, OMH wants to eliminate another 88 children's beds, 78 adult beds, and over 100 forensic beds across the state. While OMH claims that these beds are empty, data shows that prior to the pandemic most facilities across the state were either at or near capacity. In addition, in November 2020 Rockland Children's Psychiatric Center was at full capacity.

There is no question that during this pandemic OMH limited admissions and discharged clients to avoid having patients in large congregate settings. But this temporary decrease in census numbers is no excuse for permanently eliminating beds across the state, especially because the budget provides no reinvestment funding to bring up community based services. This is a flat-out elimination of services with no regard to the increasing mental health needs of our children as well as our frontline workers who are struggling to do their jobs under an enormous emotional toll.

During the mental hygiene budget hearing I listened to the Commissioner tell you that the state needed more community residence beds. Yet, OMH is proposing to privatize 100 state operated community beds across the state with no regard to continuity for the clients and no regard to the staff who have gone to work day in and day out during this crisis to serve those in need.

Your support and leadership at this time is most important. CSEA stands ready to do whatever it takes to preserve these needed services for all of those who the state would seek to abandon.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Mary".

MARY E. SULLIVAN
President