



Testimony on the FY 2027 Executive Budget Proposal Mental Hygiene

The Civil Service Employees Association (CSEA) proudly represents thousands of employees at the Office of Mental Health (OMH) and Office for People with Developmental Disabilities (OPWDD). These members, ranging from direct care workers to administrative and maintenance staff, provide essential support to New Yorkers living with developmental disabilities and serious mental health needs.

Access to Mental Healthcare

Between April 2014 and May 2025, the total number of state-operated inpatient psychiatric beds statewide fell by more than 11 percent. At the same time, the demand for mental health services is increasing. Recent estimates indicate that 21.1 percent of adult New Yorkers, or 3.2 million people, have a mental illness. This disparity has led to limited access to care and increased crises stemming from untreated mental illness.

CSEA supports an expansion of inpatient mental health services by **adding more state operated psychiatric beds in this year's budget.**

OPWDD Staffing

OPWDD facilities care for the most severe and complex clients in the developmental disability system. These clients require complex care, which can only be provided if the office has proper levels of direct care staff available. However, since 2014, OPWDD has seen a nearly 10% decrease in full-time equivalents (FTEs).

These staffing shortages put immense pressure on the employees who remain, with OPWDD employees working an average of 22 hours of overtime per pay period in 2024. The reliance on mandatory overtime drives significant turnover in the direct care workforce, averaging 35% annually. To address these issues, the State must make meaningful investment in OPWDD to improve recruitment and retention of the direct care workforce.

CSEA supports new **investments in the OPWDD workforce** to improve recruitment and retention and reduce reliance on mandatory overtime.

Extend Authorization for Expiring OPWDD Provisions

For the last ten years, statute has required OPWDD to give 90-days' notice of any closure or transfer of a state-operated individualized residential alternative (IRA), a community-based

housing program that provides care for thousands of individuals with disabilities. Without proper notification, closures can uproot the lives of these individuals, their families, and the workers in these programs. This notification requirement expires on March 31, 2026.

Request: Make the existing 90-day notice requirement permanent. (See: S.4845/A.9400)

Chapter 670 of the laws of 2021 allows the Office for People with Developmental Disabilities to establish the Care Demonstration Program, which offers community-based programs for individuals with disabilities who may not need residential care, but who could benefit from services. The authorization for this program expires on March 31, 2026.

Request: Extend statutory authorization for the Care Demonstration Program for two years through March 31, 2028. (See: S.4848/A.9399)

Conclusion

CSEA members at OMH and OPWDD provide safe, compassionate, and effective care to New Yorkers with disabilities and serious mental health needs. However, ongoing staffing shortages and insufficient inpatient capacity threaten both employees and patients. By investing in the workforce through improved recruitment and retention and expanding inpatient services to meet rising demand, the state can ensure that OMH and OPWDD are able to continue delivering high-quality care.

For more information, contact:

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