



TESTIMONY OF
WILLIAM T. GETTMAN, JR.
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER
NORTHERN RIVERS FAMILY OF SERVICES

PRESENTED TO THE
NEW YORK STATE SENATE FINANCE COMMITTEE
AND
NEW YORK STATE ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS
REGARDING THE
NEW YORK STATE EXECUTIVE BUDGET PROPOSALS FOR HEALTH
STATE FISCAL YEAR 2024-2025

NORTHERNRIVERS

RECOMMENDATION

Exempt Health Homes Serving Children from the Health Home Restructuring proposed cost savings of \$125 million in the Executive Budget; thereby avoiding hospital admission, residential placement and family crisis

Good afternoon. I am William Gettman, and I am the CEO of Northern Rivers Family of Services headquartered in the Capital Region with offices throughout New York.

About Northern Rivers Family of Services.

Northern Rivers Family of Services was established in 2012 through affiliation with longstanding family services agencies Northeast Parent & Child Society and Parsons Child & Family Center. In 2019, we affiliated with Unlimited Potential, whose operations began in Saratoga Springs. Together, the 1,400-strong workforce of Northern Rivers and member agencies serve more than 18,000 children and families in 41 upstate counties each year, with \$88 million invested through more than 60 social services and mental health programs. Northern Rivers builds a strong, successful, and healthy future for our children, families, and communities through quality services, collaboration, and innovative leadership. Our program areas include:

Residential and community-based child welfare programming including foster care, preventive services, postadoption services, and evidence-based home visiting programs;

Educational services for 400 students including early learning, pre-K, and Early Head Start, as well as accredited 853 schools (elementary, middle, and high school);

Community-based mental health and crisis services programs for children and adults including mobile crisis, school-based services, vocational rehabilitation, and licensed outpatient clinic programs; and

Community-based waiver programs for children and adults including Health Home services.

I would like to thank Chairwomen Liz Krueger and Chairwomen Helene E. Weinstein, Health Committee Chairs, and members of the Assembly Ways and Means and Senate Finance Committees for this opportunity to testify on the Governor's Executive Budget for State Fiscal Year 2024-2025.

While Northern Rivers Family of Services is grateful for many of the measures the Governor and the Legislature have taken over the past few years to stabilize the state's economy and help to build a better New York, more needs to be accomplished to make New York State a great place to live, raise a family, and operate a business. Unless the proposed Executive Budget is adjusted to adequately support the human services sector and the children, adults, and families we serve each day, New York State will not reach its goals. Without support and opportunity for ALL New Yorkers, we will not be truly successful.

We want to start by commending Governor Hochul for her continued support in this year's budget to address children's mental health and the emphasis on children within the New York Health Equity Reform (NYHER) 1115 Waiver.

During her budget presentation, Governor Hochul stated, "our children need so much help." And she's right, they do. As do the parents and caretakers who are trying

tirelessly to navigate New York State's complex child-serving systems, some of whom are battling their own mental health conditions.

Unfortunately the proposed budget creates a virtual elimination of the children health home program. The budget proposed a \$228m cut to the health home program.

This program is statewide and services nearly 30, 000 children and families. Health home services provide the case management, service referral and coordination of other state funded services. **They are designed to support families and kids in the community, avoid ER/ED visits, reduce 911 calls and reduce family disruption.**

Absent the case manager, the other services funded (called HCBS and CFTS) can't be delivered as they are strict fee for service paid work.

Make no mistake, a cost savings of this magnitude, in addition to the \$100 million enacted in last year's budget, would end the health home program for children in New York State. Where do almost 30,000 children and families go for help then?

According to the Department of Health, there is no plan for this. Since the end of 2016, Health Homes Serving Children have focused on prevention, remediation, maintenance, and improving long-term outcomes for our most vulnerable children and families. Over the last 7 years, care management services for children have been consolidated under the Health Home model to streamline and simplify the children's system of care. OMH Targeted Case Management transitioned in 2016 and then six (6) waiver programs previously under OMH, OCFS, and OPWDD state agencies transitioned in 2019.

Now, health homes are the pathway to DOH waiver services for children with serious emotional disturbance, medical complexities, and developmental disabilities. We are the Early Intervention Ongoing Service Coordinator for children who require the Medicaid waiver and Early Intervention. We are the solution for OPWDD for children under the age of 5 as it has become increasingly difficult to qualify for their services. And finally, after years of outreach and engagement, we have become the default referral source for community providers and school systems who need assistance with complex cases.

Care management was developed as part of the Medicaid redesign in previous years and is the critical link to the delivery of community service that:

- Prevent hospital placements and unnecessary trips to the emergency departments
- Prevent placement in state licensed mental health and child welfare residential settings
- Prevents 911 calls to law enforcement and mobile crisis teams
- Family disruption, escalated violence and crisis

Conclusion

In closing, we urge the Legislature to negotiate a budget with the Governor that ensures that New York State remains committed to the programs that produce positive outcomes for children, individuals, and families; one that ultimately saves the state money on more expensive interventions such as foster care, unnecessary medical care, homeless shelters, and the juvenile justice system.

Simply stated, we recommend investments in our vital not-for-profit human services organizations and communities that yield positive outcomes for all New Yorkers. We

must make New York State a great place to live, a great place to raise a family, and a great place to operate a business.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.



Children's Health Home of Upstate New York

Family Driven Care Management Services

FY' 25 BUDGET PRIORITY

"Our children need so much help..." - Governor Hochul

Exempt Health Home Serving Children from the \$228M savings to restructure Health Homes!

- ⇒ Last year, the enacted budget included a \$30M savings and a \$70M savings for FY 24 and FY 25 respectively and although *the Governor and legislature agreed it was to only impact Adult Health Homes, Children's Health Home providers have already encountered a \$20M reduction* in revenue for FY 2024-25 due to administrative actions at DOH that were not defined in the budget.
- ⇒ Additional cuts would collapse the children's program that serves over 30,000 children and youth annually, with no alternative service available for our most vulnerable population. Without care management, **there will be unintended consequences** that will impact the array of community-based services available to children, **increasing the significant barriers already in place today for our children trying to access services.**
- ⇒ Health Home Care Management has proven to improve overall health and wellbeing of children and adolescents served. **Health Homes increase the use of primary care, reduce ER visits, reduce inpatient stays, and improve healthcare effectiveness measures (HEDIS) while addressing social determinants of health** within the home, school, and community.



CHHUNY by the numbers...

- ◆ Over **12,500** children and youth served monthly
- ◆ Our network serves **55** upstate counties and includes **85** care management agencies.
- ◆ Over **800** NYS residents who make up our **Health Home workforce**
- ◆ Over **2,500** HCBS enrollees
- ◆ Over **40%** of children and youth served are determined **seriously emotionally disturbed**
- ◆ Over **80%** of enrollees have **at least one mental health** condition
- ◆ Only non-clinical support services available to medically complex children in NYS which make up **43%** of our HCBS enrollees
- ◆ Almost **1,000** children are OPWDD eligible but served through HHSC because of OPWDD's inability to provide services to young children.



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Children's Health Home of Upstate New York

Family Driven Care Management Services

January 20, 2024

The Honorable Kathy Hochul
Governor of New York State
Executive Chamber
Albany, NY 12224

Dear Governor Hochul,

CHHUNY is writing to you on behalf of our 84 care management agencies, a Health Home workforce of more than 800 New York State hard-working individuals and the 12,500 children and families they serve each month, to request a 30-day amendment to the Executive Budget. **Over 30,000 children and adolescents, across all Health Homes, would be left without the necessary support they depend on if the Restructuring of Health Homes cost savings is enacted.** We request that your amendment exempt Health Homes Serving Children from the proposed \$228 million cost savings. In addition to this request, we ask that clarification be provided as to the exact cost savings target given the Medicaid scorecard (\$125 million savings) and appropriation bills (\$228 million reduction) do not align.

During your budget proposal presentation, you stated **“our children need so much help.”** We applaud you for the significant investments you have made the past two years in youth mental health and human care services but somehow **Health Homes, who primarily serve children with mental health conditions;** in addition to children with developmental disabilities, medical complexities, and social care needs; continues to be excluded from funding opportunities, COLAs, and rate enhancements. Health Homes Serving Children are already experiencing a \$20 million revenue reduction this year due to administrative actions taken by DOH which has led to agency closures and underserved children. Now, we are at risk of being completely decimated should this cost savings be enacted.

The unintended consequences of this would impact child welfare and mental health providers across the state, further limiting their ability to provide services such as HCBS and CFTSS. Our medically complex children would be left with no support in the community. The Children's Waiver would crumble. **Without the support of care management, our children and families will suffer.** More children will languish in hospitals with no safe discharge plan; more children will be left at emergency departments due to caretaker burnout, resulting in foster care placements; more children will successfully attempt suicide; and more preventable hospitalizations will occur for our medically complex children. The result will further tax our other systems like schools, counties, and hospitals to address the needs and would require escalation to the point of institutionalization before children receive the services they deserve.

You once stated, **“our kids are our most precious resource, and it's critical they get the support they deserve.”** To impose cost savings of this magnitude with no plan to address the

thousands of individuals who would lose services is irrational and would have catastrophic consequences. We implore you to act on this request to preserve children's services in the community.

Thank you for your consideration. Please do not hesitate to contact me with any questions.

Sincerely,



Nicole Bryl, MHA
CEO
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Astor Services for Children & Families
OLV Human Services
BestSelf Behavioral Health
Children's Home of Jefferson County
Elmcrest Children's Center
Families Together
Glove House
Green Chimneys
Gustavus Adolphus Family Services
Hillside
The House of the Good Shepherd
LaSalle School
Liberty Resources
New Directions Youth and Family Services
Northern Rivers Family of Services
Pathways
St. Joseph's Hospital
Vanderheyden
Villa of Hope

Cc: Angela Profeta, Executive Chamber
Sean O'Keefe, Division of Budget
Peggy O'Shea, Division of Budget
James McDonald, Department of Health
Anne Sullivan, Office of Mental Health
Suzanne Miles-Gustave, Office of Children and Families
Amir Bassiri, Department of Health