



CAYUGA COUNTY

- Administrative Offices
34 Wright Avenue, Suite C
Auburn, NY 13021
Ph: 315.253.6227
Fax: 315.253.4528
- Mental Health Services
56 Grant Avenue
Auburn, NY 13021
Ph: 315.253.6227
Fax: 315.258-3701
- PWDD Services
31 Market Street
Auburn, NY 13021
Ph: 315.258.9531
Fax: 315.258.3185
- PROSPerity Program
146 North Street
Auburn, NY 13021
Ph: 315.282.0241
Fax: 315.252.1870
- Alcohol/Drug Addiction Svcs
G.R.A.C.E. House
58 Osborne Street
Auburn, NY 13021
Ph: 315.258.3998
Fax: 315.258.8299
- Unity Employment Svcs
34 Wright Avenue
Ph: 315.253.8732
Fax: 315.253.4528

TOMPKINS COUNTY

- Administrative Offices &
PWDD Services
15 Catherwood Rd.
Ithaca, NY 14850
Ph: 607-272-1741
Fax: 607-273-6296

ONONDAGA COUNTY

- Unity Employment Services
518 James Street, Suite B2
Syracuse, NY 13203
Ph: 315.478.4240
Fax: 315.425.7397

ONTARIO COUNTY

- Unity Employment Services
122 N. Genesee Street
Suite A206
Geneva, NY 14456
Ph: 315.781.3261
Fax: 315.781.6803

November 16, 2017

The Honorable Andrew M. Cuomo
Governor of New York State
NYS State Capitol Building
Albany, NY 12224

Dear Governor Cuomo,

I am writing today to ask for your support. Unity House of Cayuga County Inc. has been operating community-based OMH licensed and non-licensed residential treatment and housing programs for 40 years. I cannot remember a time when the finances were worse than they are today.

These programs serve the most challenging clients, manage the health and mental health for people with many co-occurring conditions and manage complicated medication regimens that were never anticipated when the models were developed. We serve numerous priority populations that were chosen specifically because of their very high needs. These program models originally were not created to serve these clients, and the state has failed, year after year, to provide adequate funding to effectively manage the growing challenges.

We are continuously being asked to do more with less: transition to Managed Care, increase reporting to the Justice Center, adhere to new Supported Housing guidelines that will cost more, be part of DSRIP, PPSs, Health Homes, to name a few, all while staff are fleeing to other, less challenging industries for a sky rocketing 40-75% turnover rate statewide. Our organization is seriously concerned about the sustainability of our OMH housing system for people with serious psychiatric disabilities.

Because of the state's failure to address the erosion issue of this vital system, our agency is facing both financial and program challenges. More importantly, this is about people and their inherent right to live in affordable housing and participate as active members of their community. Housing, along with person-centered support services provided by well-trained and compassionate staff, assists these individuals to achieve their goals and reduce barriers to their recovery.

Additionally, New York State is asking providers such as Unity House to reduce emergency room visits, hospitalizations and readmissions for the people with mental illness we serve. We couldn't agree more; if people have a place to live, see their physician regularly and take their medications as directed, they can avoid unnecessary ER visits and hospitalizations. The best way to insure these things happen is through housing and supports provided by agencies like Unity House. However, this cannot continue as is without adequately funding the current supportive housing programs.

Here at Unity House, we have quarterly Consumer Advisory Panel meetings with individuals receiving services through our mental health programs. Our entire administration attends these meetings as a way of hearing directly from those we serve on any topics/issues/complaints they have. Recurring themes reflect their concerns about overworked staff and the lack of financial resources to socialize as a group.

It is extremely critical that the state addresses these issues in this budget cycle. We need relief from the financial stress we are experiencing before we reach the point when we are unable to continue to operate housing that we and the state have worked so tirelessly to build.

We strongly support the Bring It Home campaign and request that you have a serious discussion with its representatives before we reach the point where we must give back housing. Please help us to continue to serve this vulnerable population in the manner which they deserve.

Thank you.

Sincerely,



Elizabeth Smith, Executive Director
Unity House of Cayuga County Inc.

Cc:
Paul Francis, Esq., Deputy Secretary for Health and Human Services for New York State
Ann Sullivan, M.D., Commissioner, NYS Office of Mental Health
Christopher Tavella, PhD, Acting Executive Deputy Commissioner
Robert Myers, PhD., Senior Deputy Commissioner & Division Director, NYS Office of Mental Health
Emil Slane, CFO, NYS Office of Mental Health
Lou Raffaele, Chief Budget Examiner for Mental Hygiene, NYS Division of the Budget
Moira Tashjian, Associate Commissioner, NYS Office of Mental Health
Shelly Weizman, Esq., Assistant Secretary for Mental Hygiene
Kerri Neifeld, Assistant Secretary for Human Services
Todd Scherrumen, Unit Head, Human Services, Housing and Intergovernmental Affairs

