



ACTION ALERT

120 West 57 Street New York, NY 10019 Phone 212 586-4555 Fax 212 541-6183

A non-profit tax-exempt organization representing New York City's community-based mental health sector.

COLA is not dead yet! ***Governor Pataki changes his tune***

On June 19, 1998 Governor Pataki's press office published a release entitled "I would sign COLAs for mental health workers." In the release the Governor declares that "These individuals perform critically important work that directly enhances the quality of life for thousands of mentally disabled individuals and their families...They deserve this pay increase..."

Action Requested:

Ask the Governor to act on his stated intention.

- Ask him to sign an Executive Order to fund the COLAs. The money is available; he can allocate it without legislative approval.

Tell the Assembly that they have it within their power to give us this COLA.

- Thank them for taking the early lead on this issue, but let them know that the struggle is not yet over.
- The bill passed by the Senate is active until December 31, 1998.
- The Governor has declared publicly that he would sign the bill if it comes to him.
- Copy your letter to Assembly Speaker Sheldon Silver at:

Hon. Sheldon Silver
Speaker
NY State Assembly
270 Broadway, Suite 1807
New York, NY 10007

Sample letters are attached.

If you need help identifying your Assemblymember or their address, contact Joshua Rubin at (212) 586-4555 or jfrubin@cvmha.org.

June 26, 1998

Hon. George Pataki
Executive Chamber
State Capitol
Albany, NY 12224

Dear Governor Pataki:

I am writing to ask you to fund a cost of living adjustment for direct care workers in the human services. As a direct care worker, I have been avidly following the progress of the COLA/trended Medicaid increase. Along with my co-workers I have been writing letters, attending rallies and meeting with legislators for the past six months.

I was very disappointed that the legislature left town without passing this bill. I have experienced first hand the impact of low salaries on my agency. When staff leave, client care suffers - often leading to unnecessary hospitalizations and increased demands on other community systems. We swallow our pride by accepting salaries that are up to 50% lower than our co-workers doing the same jobs in the State system.

It is my understanding that there are dollars available to fund this increase, and that you feel that it is a worthy initiative. Any executive action that you could take which could make this desperately needed pay raise possible for me and my family would be greatly appreciated, and would help me forgive you for vetoing it in the first place.

Thank you for your support and consideration.

Sincerely yours,

June 26, 1998

Hon. [insert your legislator's name here]
New York State Assembly
Albany, NY 12248

Dear Assemblymember _____ :

I would like to thank you for your hard work this session, for your commitment to the newly opened budget process, and for passing a 2 ½ year extender of the Community Reinvestment Act.

As you know we have also worked very hard over these past months to convince the Governor and the Senate that direct care workers deserve a 2.5% cost of living adjustment. Clearly we were successful in raising awareness of the importance of this issue to the human services sector.

I would like to commend the Assembly for taking the lead on COLA early on, however, I remain confused as to why the session concluded without Assembly action on it.

I understand that there are many issues vetoed by the Governor which were worthy of budget restoration this year. The COLA is one issue that stands alone on its merits.

I respectfully request that you return to Albany as soon as possible to take care of your unfinished business and pass the COLA for direct care workers.

Again, thank you for your ongoing support.

Sincerely,

cc: Hon. Sheldon Silver