



# 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 – Don't let them forget!

### *Keep the pressure on*

Following up on last year's COLA campaign, The Coalition is adopting a two-tiered strategy:

- ① We are working still towards the successful conclusion of the 1998 campaign by requesting that the Assembly pass the COLA legislation that is still pending before them if they return to Albany for a special session in December, or, the inclusion of a COLA in the Governor's 1999 Executive Budget.
  - \$ Write, fax or email Governor Pataki, Speaker Silver and Majority Leader Bruno (see attached letters).
  
- ② The Coalition has created a small Board work group to consider long-term solutions to the lack of a yearly cost of living increase for our sector. These strategies may include legislative and contractual approaches to the issue.
  - \$ All ideas will be processed through The Coalition's Government Relations Committee. Coalition members are encouraged to join the Government Relations Committee to help solve this long-term problem.

<p>Hon. George E. Pataki Governor State of New York Executive Chamber State Capitol Albany, NY 12224 Fax: (518) 486-4466 gov.pataki@chamber.state.ny.us</p>	<p>Hon. Sheldon Silver Speaker NY State Assembly Legislative Office Building # 932 Albany, NY 11248 Fax: (518) 455-5459 speaker@assembly.state.ny.us</p>	<p>Hon. Joseph L. Bruno Majority Leader New York State Senate 909 Legislative Office Building Albany, NY 12247 Fax: (518) 455-2448 bruno@senate.state.ny.us</p>
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Sample letters are attached

November 3, 1998

Hon. George E. Pataki  
Governor  
State of New York  
Executive Chamber  
State Capitol  
Albany, NY 12224

I was very gratified to learn that on June 19<sup>th</sup> of this year you indicated in a press conference the value you place on a cost of living adjustment to human services workers. At that time you said, "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..." The need has not diminished. I am writing to ask you to fund a cost of living adjustment for direct care workers in the human services in your 1999 Executive Budget.

I was very disappointed that the legislature left town without passing a COLA. 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 receive salaries that are up to 50% lower than our co-workers doing the same jobs in the State system.

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.

Thank you for your support and consideration.

Sincerely yours,

November 3, 1998

Hon. Sheldon Silver  
Speaker  
NY State Assembly  
Legislative Office Building # 932  
Albany, NY 11248

Dear Speaker Silver:

I respectfully request that you return to Albany before the end of the year to pass a COLA for direct care workers.

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

As you know agreement on a cost of living adjustment for human services workers was never reached. I feel that this is a terrible oversight. 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 were many issues vetoed by the Governor which were worthy of budget restoration last year. The COLA is one issue that stands alone on its merits.

Again, thank you for your ongoing support.

Sincerely,

November 3, 1998

Hon. Joseph L. Bruno  
Majority Leader  
New York State Senate  
909 Legislative Office Building  
Albany, NY 12247

Dear Senator Bruno:

I was very pleased that the Senate passed a cost of living adjustment for human services workers before it left town at the beginning of the summer.

Sadly, your counterparts in the Assembly failed to pass the bill before they left for the summer so we are left yet again without a cost of living adjustment.

As grateful as we would have been for a COLA last year, the bill passed would still have left out many agencies and many staff members at agencies that did get COLAs. It is unfair to leave some, who have suffered with the rest of us, out of this desperately needed COLA.

I urge you to do everything in your power to ensure that we are not forced to do without a COLA again this year. Please work to provide a COLA that is as inclusive as possible.

Again, thank you for your ongoing support.

Sincerely,