

**UJA-FEDERATION OF NEW YORK
TOWN HALL BUDGET TESTIMONY**

NOVEMBER 30, 2007

Good morning, my name is Ronald Soloway. I am the Managing Director of the Government and External Relations Department at UJA-Federation of New York.

UJA-Federation of New York helps thousands of people every year through the work of our more than one hundred network agencies. All of these organizations provide a broad range of human services and educational programming to a diverse population. Due to our base of support and the network we've built, we are the preeminent Jewish philanthropy serving both members of our community and the larger community in the New York City metropolitan area as well as overseas in countries with Jewish communities.

I would like to thank the New York State Division of the Budget for the opportunity to present testimony highlighting the key budget priorities for UJA-Federation of New York and its network of agencies for the FY 08-08 fiscal year. Our testimony will focus on the following issues:

- Cost of Living Adjustments (COLAs)
- Need to restructure and refinance community based mental health clinics
- Medicaid
- Expansion of community based aging programs
- Programs and services for those affected by Autism
- State immigrant opportunity initiative

COST OF LIVING ADJUSTMENTS (COLAs)

Recruiting and retaining qualified staff to work with New York's most vulnerable is difficult because of inadequate salaries and benefits. With few resources available, not-for-profit agencies continually experience high leave rates among employees which not only impede the delivery of quality services, but also result in efficiency losses. When a program has a high turnover rate, it suffers from indirect costs that result from reduced supervision, employee burnout, and the learning curves of new employees, as well as the direct costs, which include expenditures on overtime pay and job advertisements. In the presence of high turnover rates, it often costs more to provide lesser quality services to fewer clients.

Not-for-profits (NFP's) are losing staff to employers that are able to provide salaries that have kept up with the rate of inflation. These employers include City and State agencies,

1199 and other unionized contracted agencies, hospitals, and other for-profit companies with similar career paths and educational attainment requirements.

It is imperative that not-for-profits be able to offer cost of living adjustments (COLAs) to their workers. COLAs enable not-for-profits to remain competitive in the job market and also ensure that services are delivered efficiently and produce the best outcomes.

The FY06-07 Enacted Budget included provisions for a three-year Consumer Price Indexed COLA effective, October 1, 2006, and each April 1st for the two succeeding years, 2007 and 2008. Recognizing the importance of regular adjustments, the FY07-08 Enacted Budget supported the continuation of a multi-year COLAs for a number of social service programs.

UJA-Federation strongly recommends providing the third year of the human service COLA in the FY08-09 Budget. UJA-Federation of New York also proposes extending the COLA for another three-year period to ensure continuity in the provision of COLAs to this critical sector.

While we are thankful for the many service areas covered, several key areas did not benefit from these important adjustments. To ensure that workers across the human services sector are treated equitably we request that the following additional program areas receive COLA investments on April 1, 2008:

- OCFS: The entire youth services sub-sector has been consistently overlooked, and are in particular need of a COLA, especially in the areas of youth development and disconnected youth. We estimate a **3% COLA** for Runaway and Homeless Youth, Youth Development and Delinquency Prevention, and Special Delinquency Prevention programs would cost approximately **\$1.4 million** this fiscal year.
- SOFA: Social Adult Day Care and NORC-Supportive Service Programs. We estimate a **3% COLA** would cost approximately **\$168,000** for this fiscal year.
- OTDA: SRO and Family Homeless Services. (With the expectation that the City of New York will implement COLAs which call for a State match.) We do not currently have an estimate of the State's share of this COLA.

UJA-Federation of New York supports the following:

- *Funding for the third of year of the COLA*
- *Extending the current multi-year not-for-profit human services COLA for another three-year period*
- *Inclusion of OCFS, SOFA, and OTDA programs left out of previous year COLAs*

REFINANCING COMMUNITY MENTAL HEALTH PROGRAMS

As a result of welfare reform, managed care, and inadequate reimbursement rates there are fewer people with serious mental illness able to access traditional Medicaid-funded community mental health services. In fact, a State program designed to provide services

to those not eligible for Medicaid (COPS) is often being used to subsidize managed care plans below cost contracts with mental health providers. At particular risk is the outpatient mental health clinic which provides the community with a portal into the public mental health system.

Funding for Article 31 outpatient mental health clinics in New York is fragmented, complex, and insufficient. It detracts from the therapeutic and rehabilitative goals of care and is not designed to facilitate the delivery of evidenced-based services. It interferes with and does not facilitate a close therapeutic relationship between the clinician and the client and may impede client/consumer recovery. Most importantly, mental health clinics are losing money, threatening the vitality of this crucial community-based service of care.

The purpose of clinics in the mental health system is to help people with mental illness or serious emotional disorders reduce their symptomatology and return to or maintain a productive life in the community.

UJA-Federation of NY believes a new system of reimbursement should be developed for outpatient mental health clinics, which can both improve the lives of mental health clients/consumers and reduce overall costs to the State and its citizens.

UJA-Federation of NY supports the following:

- *A new reimbursement system based on regional provider costs and actual revenues that creates a more efficient and sustainable continuing therapeutic relationship for clients/consumers*
- *Rate premiums for priority target populations, especially heavy users*
- *Certification of credentialed staff that have the expertise in desired multiple specialties and are able to participate in tracking outcomes that reflect a finite set of expectations*
- *Incentivizing performance outcomes*

MEDICAID

UJA-Federation of New York is very concerned **that the Medicaid program will continue to provide quality services as our non-hospital agencies in our network** receive more than \$600 million in Medicaid funding annually. When our affiliated hospitals are added to the total Medicaid funding is over \$2 billion. With this funding important services are provided to tens of thousands of New Yorkers in the realms of physical health, mental health, long term care and developmental disabilities.

We applaud the Governor's efforts to create a patient first system by enhancing access to healthcare. However, as we move to reform Medicaid we need to be cognizant that institutions providing care receive adequate reimbursements for service. While we applaud lowering the cost of health care, reform should be driven by increasing quality and not by arbitrary saving figures to close budget gaps.

COMMUNITY BASED AGING

End of Life Care

Despite the availability of excellent end-of-life care through hospice and palliative care services there is a need for additional end of life care programs. State funding is necessary to ensure that those who are seriously ill and possibly dying and their families have the support of advocates/care managers to help them navigate the system and receive appropriate and continuous care. Funding should also promote and strengthen community specific models of culturally, religiously, and linguistically appropriate care that ensures that those with advanced illness have their healthcare choices honored, pain and symptoms managed, and spiritual needs met.

Since 2002, UJA-Federation has funded philanthropically a Jewish Healing and Hospice Alliance that has been addressing this issue by providing comprehensive end-of-life services for the Jewish community and people of all backgrounds in New York City and the surrounding area. Regional care centers offer access to an integrated network of services providing: information and referral services; practical assistance and advocacy; spiritual and pastoral guidance; individual, family, and group support; connections to hospice care; and bereavement counseling. This integrated network of services wrap around care offered by institutional/palliative and hospice programs providing individuals with advanced illnesses, and their family members, access to much-needed support services.

Last years inclusion of \$200,000 in the State budget, while nominal, builds a foundation for a statewide initiative for those affected by advanced and terminal illness.

UJA-Federation of New York supports the following:

- *Expansion of the End of Life Care initiative to \$1,000,000 in the coming year*

NORCs – Naturally Occurring Retirement Community Supportive Service Programs

NORC Supportive Service Programs enable the elderly to age in place. These programs are targeted to help meet the needs and aspirations of the great majority of seniors who are middle- and low-income, many of whom live in naturally occurring retirement communities. These are communities that were built for families, but which now have a significant concentration of residents who are seniors. UJA-Federation has played an important role at both the national, state and local levels to develop and nurture the growth of the supportive program model.

The supportive service programs, organized to help enable seniors to remain at home are predicated on partnerships -- between a community's residents, professional service providers, neighborhood organizations or housing managers (if in apartment buildings) and government. These programs recognize the impact that caring, organized residents

can make when working in partnership with professional service providers to help create a community in which it is both good and possible to grow old.

Today, there are 54 NORC Supportive Service Programs located throughout the state, providing a social safety net to more than 50,000 of our seniors.

The State budget now includes \$4.4 million for NORC Supportive Service Programs. Half of this funding goes to supportive service programs in classic NORCs, which are aged-in communities that have common ownership, i.e., co-ops, housing authorities and major private landlords, and are characteristic of urban centers. The remaining half support programs in Neighborhood NORCs, which are aged-in communities with unaffiliated housing, i.e., single and two-family homes, low-rise apartment buildings more characteristic of our suburbs. You have recognized the effectiveness of these programs; since the legislature's most recent addition of \$2 million was base-lined in the Governor's FY07-08 budget.

UJA-Federation looks forward to results from the United Hospital Fund sponsored NORC Health Indicators Project, as well as recommendations from the NYS NORC Advisory Committee to lay out future policy directions.

UJA-Federation of NY recommends the following:

- *Increased funding in the FY08-09 Budget to help existing NORC programs deepen services in health prevention and maintenance realms*

Elder Abuse

Elder abuse is a large, yet hidden problem. It takes many forms, including physical abuse, sexual abuse, psychological (emotional) abuse, neglect and financial exploitation. In 1996 researchers estimated that there were between 80,000 and 1,860, 000 abused elders in this country, a startling 150% increase from 1986. Elder abuse is severely under reported with only 1 in 5 cases being reported in 1980 and only 1 in 8 cases being reported today. Many older persons fail to report abuse either because of shame or the fact that they are dependent on their abusers and fear being abandoned or institutionalized. Public and professional awareness of elder abuse is limited because many older persons are isolated in their homes. As other senior population continues to grow, the incidence of elder abuse is likely to escalate.

Caring for a dependent elder is stressful and can easily become a larger burden than anticipated. As a caregiver has his/her own life to lead, the stress of caring for another person can become too much to handle, especially if the elderly person suddenly becomes significantly more impaired or incapacitated. Either a sudden change or the gradual build-up of an increased dependence may trigger abuse. In some cases, elder abuse may be the result of a family caught in a cycle of violence. The chance of elder abuse occurring in a family is further increased should the caregiver have a drug or alcohol addiction or other personal problems.

To prevent the stress of caring for the elderly from leading to abuse, an effort should be made to educate caregivers on the dangers of elder abuse and teach them how to prevent it as well as to provide them with respite from caring for a dependent elder. The elderly, as well, should be made aware of the fact that they do not deserve to be battered and they should know what resources are available to them.

While providing help for victims is essential, preventing elder abuse before it occurs is of equal importance. Being aware of the causes of elder abuse provides insight into how to work towards prevention.

UJA-Federation of New York supports the following:

- *Additional funding for outreach, education, and case management relating specifically to elder abuse*

Social Adult Day Care Services

Social adult day care services offer therapeutic and recreational programming for older adults experiencing memory impairment or who are physically frail. Programming typically offers individuals an opportunity for recreational and educational activities that foster relationships and enhance self-esteem. These services also provide older adults who are living at home and might be isolated an opportunity for socialization and stimulation, as well as providing a respite for caregivers.

UJA-Federation of New York also supports the concept of an enhanced social adult day care that recognizes the need for different levels of service at different stages of someone's life. In this regard, we support an enhanced social model day care demonstration program that would allow social model adult day programs to subcontract with home care agencies to provide additional services currently not allowed. It also allows home care agencies to provide services and subcontract to social adult day care providers for the day care component. This in effect will ensure that individuals who are functioning well in a social model will be able to remain in the social model should additional services be required, such as, an injection for diabetes, rather than be ineligible for the program and either go without service or go into a higher level and more costly setting for care.

Last years state budget included an additional \$500,000 for new social adult day care services. While UJA-Federation is grateful, additional dollars must be infused into this program to serve a much larger population requiring service.

UJA-Federation of New York supports the following:

- *Increased funding for social adult day care services*
- *An enhanced social adult day care demonstration program that would allow programs to subcontract with home care agencies*
- *Any Medicaid long-term care waiver includes social adult day care as a Medicaid funded service*

AUTISM

Autism is considered the fastest growing developmental disorder in the United States, occurring in as many as 1 in every 166 births. Despite the increasingly high prevalence of this disorder, autism research and services remain under funded. Though significant progress has been made in recent years to increase funding in these realms much more must be done to confront the challenges endured by an overwhelming number of families.

Autism is a complex brain disorder that often inhibits a person's ability to communicate, respond to surroundings, and form relationships with others. While some people with autism are mildly affected, most people with this condition require lifelong supervision and care and have significant language impairments. Experts agree that early intervention is important in addressing the symptoms associated with autism and can have dramatic effects in improving individual outcomes.

There is growing concern that with the increasing numbers of individuals being diagnosed with Autism those on the higher end of the spectrum are least likely to have access to publicly-funded services. Research indicates that 33%-40% of those on the Autistic spectrum have IQs above 70 and are thus not considered developmentally delayed, though an IQ of below 70 would automatically qualify them for governmental support. We are aware that one could conceivably qualify even with an IQ of 70 or above with poor adaptive skills. However, these individuals often are difficult to document, as they frequently have pockets of high-functioning behaviors that may preclude them from meeting the criteria under poor adaptive behavior skills.

UJA-Federation played a role in securing \$5 million annually so that the OMRDD Family Support Program can provide needed after school and weekend services to individuals with autism and their families. This program targets the most severely autistic individuals and leaves those with less severe symptoms without access to needed after school and weekend wraparound services.

Without access to publicly-funded programs, these higher-functioning individuals with autism too often are "falling through the cracks", with families unable to afford the supports and programs that would help them to fulfill their potential, and maximize their quality of life. Indeed, an individual with autism with an IQ above 70, but with significant limitations in social and emotional functioning, as well as pragmatic language deficits, almost inevitably will meet with vocational failure. Their families experience extraordinary stress, and live in fear of what will happen to their children as they themselves grow old, and infirmed.

The number of children diagnosed with Autism is growing rapidly and the need for assistance is much greater than the availability of programs and services. It is especially important to close this gap because; consistent, quality, and appropriate services can have a very positive impact on those with Autism, while those who are neglected deteriorate.

UJA-Federation of NY supports the following:

- *Ensuring that higher functioning individuals on the Autism spectrum have access to the services that they need*
- *Additional funding to OMRDD for programming that specifically provides wraparound services to higher functioning persons on the Autistic spectrum*
- *Quality training/professional development in schools and out-of-school-time programs that teach direct service staff how best to manage behavior and minimize misbehavior*

STATE IMMIGRANT OPPORTUNITY INITIATIVE

Locally, UJA-Federation agencies such as Shorefront YM&YWH, New York Association for New Americans (NYANA), Metropolitan Council on Jewish Poverty, and the Federation of Employment and Guidance Services (FEGS) to name a few, currently assist immigrant individuals and families to become citizens, to attain self-sufficiency, to reduce or eliminate the reliance of immigrants on public assistance benefits as a primary means of support, and to provide legal services.

However, the demand for service is rapidly increasing as new immigrants strive to become productive and self-sufficient citizens. Often times, immigrants find themselves on waiting lists for such basic services as case management, English-as-a-Second Language, civics classes, legal assistance to acquire citizenship, job training and placement assistance, post-employment services necessary to ensure job retention, and services necessary to assist individuals and family members to maintain a permanent residence in New York State.

As New York State's population becomes more diverse, knowledge of English is increasingly important in every facet of life. Immigrants live in every area of the state, filling important workforce needs in key sectors of the state's economy. Mastering the English language not only enables immigrants to become citizens but also enables them to access quality health care, increase their safety at the workplace, move from low-skilled jobs to higher-skilled and higher-paying jobs, and play an active role in their children's education.

Immigrants desperately need and want to learn English. According to the Census 2000, 24% of all New Yorkers cannot speak English well and 47% of all New Yorkers speak a language other than English at home. 2/3 of foreign-born adults in New York City are classified as limited English proficient.

However, many immigrants' desire to learn English is stifled by the lack of opportunities to do so. Insufficient funding and long waiting lists for ESL classes prevent immigrants from learning English and fully participating in our society. While English language and civics instruction is vital to helping immigrants gain U.S. citizenship, planned changes to the naturalization exam, such as more civics questions, a new reading comprehension section, and longer writing and reading tasks will only make it harder to pass the exam making citizenship out of reach for much of the immigrant population.

Immigrants frequently are the victims of scam artists and other self-styled “experts” who, in exchange for huge sums of money, promise “work permits” and “green cards” to anyone, regardless of whether the person is actually eligible. Too often, immigrants end up facing deportation as a result of these “services.” Affordable and trustworthy legal services are needed for immigrants in New York State as they seek work and citizenship in this country.

Immigrant workers also face exploitation, discrimination, and wage-and-hour violations in the workplace. Unscrupulous employers frequently violate overtime, minimum wage, workers’ compensation, and anti-discrimination laws, knowing that immigrant workers are generally reluctant to seek justice out of fear of repercussions that would affect their ability to remain in the country.

In this context, immigrant workers need legal services more than ever. Free and low-cost legal services are crucial to enable workers to file wage and hour complaints, report health and safety violations or to access workers’ compensation benefits. Moreover, limited-English-proficient immigrants require culturally and linguistically appropriate legal support to aid them in navigating forms and legal processes that are primarily in English. At present, only a handful of agencies in New York City provide worker legal services to the millions of immigrant workers laboring in the city’s economy. Failure to provide legal services to enforce workplace rights for immigrant workers brings down wages and erodes workplace protections for all employees and puts law-abiding employers at a disadvantage relative to competitors who flout the law.

UJA-Federation of NY recommends a multi-year \$100 million Immigrant Opportunity Initiative to assist immigrant individuals and families to become citizens, meet the increased demand for ESL and legal services, and add a new component that provides employment-related legal services to the millions of immigrant workers laboring in the State’s economy. We recommend that services provided under a State Immigrant Opportunity Initiative should include, but not be limited to:

- Case management
- English-as-a-second Language
- Civics classes
- Legal assistance
- Job training and placement assistance
- Post-employment services necessary to ensure job retention
- Social and legal services necessary to assist individuals and family members to maintain a permanent residence in New York State

The sum of this initiative, while large, would demonstrate New York State’s commitment to serving Immigrant populations and ensuring their place within the public sphere. We recognize that implementing a State Immigrant Opportunity Initiative would also take time. We are requesting that funding for this initiative be delivered over the next ten years with an initial investment in the 2008-09 New York State budget.