



OFFICE OF THE BROOKLYN BOROUGH PRESIDENT

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**City Council Committees on Mental Health, Disabilities and Addiction
Mental Health Roadmap Legislative Package
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Good morning Chair Lee and thank you for holding this hearing today. Ensuring the mental health and wellness of our New Yorkers is a priority for my administration. As Brooklyn Borough President, I have witnessed how the mental health of my constituents are affected by the intersectionality of other quality of life factors, including housing, physical health, poverty, and maternal health.

I am pleased to sign on to many of the bills in the Mental Health Roadmap Legislative Package that are being considered today. Of the bills being considered, I'd like to highlight a few:

Int 1006-2023 requires establishing and implementing an education and outreach campaign on mental health services offered under NYC Care. Over 100,00 of our most vulnerable New Yorkers are enrolled in the NYC Care program because they either cannot qualify for health insurance or do not find marketplace healthcare affordable. I encourage Health + Hospitals to extend its contracts with current community-based partners to support this outreach campaign, who have helped make these enrollments possible since program inception. I also urge Health + Hospitals to ensure that there are plans to expand current, linguistically-appropriate mental health provider staffing to ensure that there is capacity to support the projected increased demand resulting from increased outreach.

Int 1018-2023 requires reporting on involuntary removals. The involuntary removal of individuals experiencing acute mental health crises from our streets and transportation systems cannot guarantee effective mental health outcomes. In fact, it is often retraumatizing and driven by bias. We must ensure that we have plans in place to have adequate psychiatric beds and support systems as those who are involuntarily removed as transferred to care. This bill will ensure that we have accurate data reporting to understand this effort's effect on our unhoused populations, and the resources necessary to adequately serve those transitioned into the system. I also recommend that reporting include whether an individual was provided referrals upon discharge to better assess system capacity for adequate follow-up care.

Int 1021-2023 ensures that each borough has at least two crisis respite centers to provide accessible mental health treatment and resources. We support having this safe, community-based alternative to hospitalization for people experiencing emotional crisis, which also helps reduce

overcriminalization of individuals requiring mental support. Currently, New York City has fewer than 70 crisis beds for a population of over 8 million. However, the proposed one-week stay limitation is insufficient to ensure full stabilization of the individual; while we recognize that length of stay might be limited by cost, capacity, and insurance coverage, an effective program must consider individual needs. Programs should also be made accessible to the uninsured population and the unhoused, with peer specialists who can provide proper referrals. I would also like to see programs that are specialized in care for prenatal and postnatal birthing people, who have specialized needs associated with mental health changes during and after pregnancy. Finally, like at our hospitals and shelters, we need measures to ensure accountability and transparency for the care being provided at respite centers.

Res 0583-2023 calls on New York State to subsidize education and licensing costs for CUNY students committing to a profession in mental health, while **Res 05484-2023** calls for interstate licensure portability. The State's proposals to diversify and increase the mental health workforce to provide linguistically and culturally competent care is a great start. The Council should also consider ensuring that fellows who benefit from subsidized education opportunities are provided pathways and incentives to return to serve within their own communities in NYC. This will provide us to ensure that local shortages of representative workforces are adequately addressed.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak today, and I look forward to working closely with City Council on the next steps in this mental health bill package.