May X, 2020

To Your Member of Congress Here:

Please make sure that $38.5 billion is included in the next stimulus package to provide emergency supplemental funds to substance use and mental health disorders service organizations. I am very concerned, along with substance use disorders prevention, harm reduction, treatment, and recovery programs across New York State, that the fiscal toll of the COVID-19 crisis, coupled with decades of under-funding, threaten the very existence of our programs. Emergency stimulus funds are necessary to ensure the fiscal viability of service providers and to ensure access to critical community-based services at a time when deaths related to alcohol, opioids, and other drugs are spiking again; alcohol sales are up dramatically; suicide is increasing; and mental health disorders are on the rise.

Emergency supplemental funding for substance use and mental health disorders service providers would be used to cover business and service delivery expenses caused by the COVID19 pandemic, to help purchase personal protective equipment (PPE) and other critical medical supplies, bolster workforce recruitment and retention, expand telehealth infrastructure, and help offset other expenses associated with keeping service providers fully operational, especially during this challenging time.

Behavioral health service providers were already addressing the opioid overdose and addiction crisis and suicide epidemic before COVID-19. The onset of the COVID-19 pandemic has stretched the workforce and finances of these organizations to their limits. Emergency supplemental funding would help to immediately address fiscal hardship and ensure that programs are more adequately equipped to provide comprehensive care to individuals seeking treatment and support.

As Congress continues to appropriate funding to address the COVID-19 emergency, the needs of behavioral health programs must be a part of the discussion. Please support, as part of the next Congressional stimulus package, inclusion of $38.5B in emergency funds to provide much needed relief for substance use and mental health disorders service providers.

Thank you for your leadership and attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,

John Smith