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## **As Child Mental Health Crisis Grows, Advocates Call for State Action in Workforce Shortage**

*New York Children Are Experiencing Increasing Emotional Distress but Current Workforce Shortage Prevents Families from Accessing Adequate Preventive Services*

**NEW YORK, NY --** In response to today's mental health workforce shortage hearing in Albany, Citizens' Committee for Children President Jennifer March issued the following statement on behalf of the [Campaign for Healthy Minds, Healthy Kids](#):

"The depth of the mental health crisis for New York's children is difficult to overstate. Even prior to the pandemic, suicide was the second leading cause of death among children ages 15-19, and roughly half of children with a behavioral health condition did not receive treatment or counseling. Now, 140,000 children in the US have lost a parent or caregiver to the pandemic; almost 7,000 of them in New York. Yet, as our children experience increasing emotional distress, New York's workforce shortage results in a dearth of service capacity that prevents children from accessing adequate preventive services and clinical treatment, resulting in a stark increase of hospitalizations.

"Today's hearing exposed the ballooning waiting lists and closed intake in community-based and school-based behavioral health services. The only way to address this crisis in a manner that confronts the driver of the problem is to increase the rates of reimbursement for services and to expand what Medicaid and commercial insurers cover. Medicaid rates for certain clinical services have been independently reviewed to be as much as 50% too low to cover required staffing while outpatient clinic providers cannot cover the cost of recruiting and retaining licensed practitioners. We urge Medicaid reform and an expansion of reimbursable services through both Medicaid and commercial insurance to ensure providers can bill for the developmentally appropriate preventive and clinical services for children and their families; services which prevent the need for more intensive and costly services later in life. The way New York State responds to this workforce shortage will determine the health and wellbeing of our state's children for generations to come. At this moment in time it's a matter of life and death for our kids. New York State must take action before it's too late."

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**ABOUT**

[\*The Campaign for Healthy Minds, Healthy Kids\*](#) is a statewide coalition of behavioral health providers, advocates, and New York families, joining together to create the public and political will necessary to ensure all children and adolescents in New York receive the high-quality behavioral health services they need.