



For immediate release

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*****News Release*****

Children's Mental Health Advocates Rallied in NYC to Urge State Action Against Federal Budget Cuts

July 24, 2025 (Manhattan, New York) — Today, children's mental health advocates, families, youth, elected leaders, and behavioral health providers gathered at New York Foundling in East Harlem to call on state leaders to defend and strengthen access to children's mental health care in the face of devastating federal budget cuts.

State leaders including **Assemblymember Jo Anne Simon, Senator Jabari Brisport, Assemblymember Jessica González-Rojas, Assemblymember Manny De Los Santos, Assemblymember Nily Rozic, and Assemblymember Edward Gibbs** joined the rally in support of urgent state action. The event was organized by the **Campaign for Healthy Minds, Healthy Kids**, in partnership with organizations including **Citizens' Committee for Children of New York, Families Together in New York State, New York Foundling, JCCA, and Advocates for Children**. Impacted parents and young people also shared powerful testimonies about the real-life impact of New York's struggling behavioral health system.

Participants gathered in response to recent Congressional budget cuts that threaten to devastate New York's Medicaid and healthcare systems, potentially resulting in 1.5 million New Yorkers losing health insurance and billions of dollars in lost healthcare funding. These cuts come amid an already worsening children's mental health crisis and a behavioral health workforce shortage that is forcing children and families onto months-long waitlists for care.

Advocates warned that the proposed federal cuts would further weaken a system that is already struggling to meet the needs of thousands of children statewide. Medicaid remains the primary funder of mental health and substance use disorder (SUD) services for children, youth, and families in New York. The compounded impact of federal cuts could force the state to slash vital human services programs, with children, the largest share of Medicaid recipients, at particular risk.

Speakers emphasized that cuts to Medicaid, anti-hunger programs, and child tax credits will only deepen poverty and increase children's exposure to adverse childhood experiences — with long-term consequences for their mental health and wellbeing.

The **Campaign for Healthy Minds, Healthy Kids** urged state leaders to safeguard children's mental health by protecting Medicaid and commit to investing in a stronger, more equitable behavioral health system before more lives are put at risk.

"Children across New York are facing an unprecedented mental health crisis, and we cannot allow federal budget cuts to make things worse. Our state must step up and invest in a behavioral health system that meets the needs of every child and family. Thank you to Healthy Minds, Healthy Kids, for your dedication to our children's mental health," said **Assemblymember Jo Anne Simon, Chair of the Mental Health Committee.**

"As a social worker, I've seen firsthand how the youth mental health crisis is tearing through families, especially in communities in my district. These federal cuts are not just numbers on a page; they are direct threats to the wellbeing of our children. By cutting over \$1 trillion from Medicaid, the President and congressional Republicans are destroying the very infrastructure built to address the youth mental health crisis, pouring fuel on a fire that is already out of control. New York must rise to the moment by protecting Medicaid, investing boldly in mental health, and building a system that leaves no child behind," said **Assemblymember Manny De Los Santos.**

"The Trump administration's passage of these devastating budget cuts will strip 1.5 million New Yorkers of their health insurance and cost our state \$13.5 billion in healthcare funding. This is incredibly unjust and a human rights travesty. Among the most vulnerable victims of these cuts are our children. The Trump administration does not care about our children! Medicaid is the backbone of mental health and substance use care for young people in New York, at a time we are seeing growing numbers of mental health issues across our state. These cuts are literally putting lives at risk. We have to fight to protect our children, and to protect all New Yorkers. Fund our healthcare now!" said **Assemblymember Jessica González-Rojas.**

"Every child in New York deserves access to high-quality mental health care, but now that is at risk with federal cuts threatening health coverage for millions of New Yorkers. Medicaid is a lifeline for kids' behavioral health services, and we cannot afford to let it disappear. I am proud to stand with the Healthy Minds, Healthy Kids campaign, in defending the care our kids depend on," said **Assemblywoman Nily Rozic.**

"The budget cuts passed by Congress are discriminatory, devastating and simply cruel," said **Raysa S. Rodriguez, Executive Director at Citizens' Committee for Children.** "The direct cuts to services along with worsening poverty and increased exposure to trauma and adversity are a significant threat to the mental health and wellbeing of children. New York must fight back against the impact of these cuts. Alongside families and advocates, CCC calls on the Governor and state leaders to commit to investing in children's mental health services and access to care. Failing to do so, will have immense consequences for New York."

"Families Together in New York State urges our leaders to prioritize care, not cuts, for our children and families. We cannot stand by as essential behavioral healthcare services face the threat of federal disinvestment. Now is the time for New York to take bold, protective action by investing in a stronger, more equitable system of care. When we invest in children's mental health today, we invest in the future, stability, and wellbeing of our communities tomorrow," said **Paige Pierce, CEO of Families Together in New York State.**

"At The New York Foundling, we believe that all children, adults, and families can reach their full potential. For thousands of our neighbors, that begins with basic access to quality behavioral health care. Our services offer treatment, foster community, strengthen connections, and build long-lasting skills and resilience. We urge state leaders to protect Medicaid and preserve these critical services," said **Dr. Kristy-Lee Jean-Pierre, Senior Vice President of Specialized Clinical and Psychiatric Services at The New York Foundling.**

"For too long, New York's children have struggled with unmet mental and behavioral health needs. Today, we stand together to demand that every child receive the care they deserve, even in the face of looming federal budget cuts," said **Ronald E. Richter, CEO of JCCA.** "We know Governor Hochul and our state legislators care deeply about our children's futures—now is the time for decision-makers to invest in mental and behavioral health so our young people can grow into healthy, thriving adults."

"Each year Advocates for Children hears from numerous families of students struggling with mental health crises, whose children are sent to the hospital or removed or suspended from school instead of receiving the mental health support they need to remain in the school community. Accessing mental health support in school is critical to their ability to keep up with their studies and get the care they need, and we are deeply concerned about the impact that the federal budget cuts could have on these mental health supports. We are calling on our state elected leaders to ensure that students can keep getting the mental health supports they need to succeed in school," said **Rohini Singh, Director of the School Justice Project at Advocates for Children of New York.**

"Medicaid saved my son's life. I am an advocate and a mother who almost lost her child to suicide. Medicaid was the thread that held us together when everything else unraveled. Our state cannot afford to go backwards and have more children in ERs, in psych wards, or in graves. In the face of federal budget cuts, our state leaders must commit to protecting and enhancing the behavioral health services that are a lifeline for thousands of New York families like mine," said **Christina Hauptman, Parent and Family Peer Support Specialist.**

ABOUT: *The Campaign for Healthy Minds, Healthy Kids* is a statewide coalition of advocates, behavioral health providers, 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.

