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COMMUNITY BOARD No. 2, MANHATTAN

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May 24, 2023

Hon. Christopher Marte
NYC Council Member
65 East Broadway
New York, NY 10002

Hon. Erik Bottcher
NYC Council Member
224 West 30th St., Suite 1206
New York, NY 10001

Hon. Carlina Rivera
NYC Council Member
254 East 4th St.
New York, NY 10009

Hon. Adrienne Eadie Adams
NYC Council Speaker
165-90 Baisley Blvd.
Jamaica, NY 11434

Ashwin Vasan
Commissioner
NYC Dept. of Health and Mental Hygiene
42-09 28th St., 7th Fl.
Long Island City, NY 11101

Hon. Mark Levine
Manhattan Borough President
1 Centre St., 19th Fl.
New York, 10007

Dear Council Member Marte, Council Member Bottcher, Council Member Rivera,
Speaker Adams, Commissioner Vasan, and Borough President Levine:

At its Full Board meeting on May 18, 2023, CB#2, Manhattan (CB2, Man.), adopted the following resolution:

RESOLUTION urging immediate funding of programs that can be implemented on a short timeline to support individuals suffering serious mental illness (SMI) in Mid- and Lower Manhattan.

WHEREAS:

- 1) Since New York began to empty state psychiatric hospitals in light of inhumane conditions¹ and a reaffirmation of patients' rights², the city and state's public health

¹ For additional background, see New York State Nurses Association, "A Crisis in Inpatient Psychiatric Services in New York State Hospitals" p.4

<https://www.nysna.org/sites/default/files/attach/ajax/2020/08/Psych%20Whitepaper%20NYSNA.pdf>

systems have lacked a comprehensive network of services to treat individuals living with serious mental illness (SMI).

- 2) Serving individuals with SMI has become a heightened priority for the state and the city. Gov. Kathy Hochul has pledged \$1 billion³ to address behavioral health needs in New York State. Mayor Eric Adams's 2023 plan "[Care, Community, Action: A Mental Health Plan for New York City](#)" describes serious mental illness (SMI) as an urgent concern for the city, and the [New York City Council](#) has also made it a priority for FY24.
- 3) Supportive housing is widely recognized as the most comprehensive tool to address SMI and is insufficient supply. The Governor and the Mayor have committed to increase the supply of supportive housing in NYC, which will require significant capital investment and political commitment over the years required for building it. The Governor and the Mayor have also committed to expand other infrastructure, such as clubhouses and hospital beds, which are additional comprehensive approaches that will require time to reach full operation.
- 4) Given the time required for these and other initiatives, there is a pressing need for interventions that can be implemented on a shorter timeline of one-to-three-years; that require a lower level of public investment; and that can be expanded or retracted in response to the city's needs.
- 5) We see a dire need for these programs to operate in the area below 59th Street in Manhattan. Manhattan's Central Business District, as well its downtown neighborhoods, include parks, transit stations, and busy streets frequented by apparently homeless individuals, many of whom appear to suffer from SMI that has gone untreated.
- 6) Programs deemed successful at treating SMI in the field include New York State Assertive Community Treatment (ACT) and New York City Intensive Mobile Treatment (IMT) Both ACT and IMT teams are in insufficient supply. The wait list to be assigned to an ACT team is estimated at 800 people. The wait list for an IMT team is estimated at 300.
- 7) High demand for behavioral health professionals combined with low salaries budgeted for ACT and IMT teams jeopardizes the ability of the State and the City to sufficiently staff these programs to expand their number as needed and as promised.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT COMMUNITY BOARD 2, MANHATTAN,

- 1) Commends the Governor of New York and the Mayor of New York City for committing to expand the number of supportive housing units and hospital beds for individuals living with serious mental illness (SMI), and commends the New York City Council for its attention to SMI.
- 2) Stresses that safe housing is the most critical stabilizing factor for individuals with SMI and urges the city to leverage our existing infrastructure to increase the number of hotel rooms and respite beds available on a short timeline while the permanent housing that has been promised gets built.
- 3) Urges the continued expansion of the New York State Assertive Community Treatment program (ACT) and the New York City Intensive Mobile Treatment program (IMT) until the long waiting lists for these services have been eliminated.

² For a description of Supreme Court decision *Olmstead v LC*, see <https://www.olmsteadrights.org/about-olmstead/>

³ <https://www.governor.ny.gov/programs/transforming-new-york-states-continuum-mental-health-care>

- 4) Urges NYS and NYC to offer competitive salaries and to consider regulatory changes that would better leverage the existing supply of mental health professionals to address critical staffing shortages.
- 5) Urges the NYC DOHMH to create a clearer process, for consumers and providers alike, for accessing the network of services available to those suffering SMI.
- 6) Encourages the expansion of B-HEARD into Manhattan below 59th Street, with ongoing evaluation of its successful response to 911-routed calls, rapid dispatch, and crisis de-escalation.
- 7) Sees opportunities for community-based organization to contribute to the well-being of unsheltered homeless individuals with measures such as shower vans, distribution of hygiene kits, opportunities for shaving and haircuts, access to laundry facilities, respite beds, etc.

Vote: Passed: 40 Board Members in favor.
2 Abstain (Z. Kazzaz, E. Olson)

We respectfully request that your agency take action consistent with the positions expressed in the attached.

Sincerely,



Susan Kent, Chair
Community Board #2, Manhattan



Susanna Aaron, Chair
Human Services Committee
Community Board #2, Manhattan

SK/EM

c: Hon. Dan Goldman, Congressman
Hon. Brian Kavanagh, NYS Senator
Hon. Brad Hoylman-Sigal, NYS Senator
Hon. Deborah J. Glick, NYS Assembly Member
Hon. Grace Lee, NYS Assembly Member