

## STATEMENT OF CUNY CAMPUS COUNSELING DIRECTORS ON CUNY MENTAL HEALTH

My name is Cindy Bink and I am the Director of Counseling at City Tech. Today I am speaking for all CUNY Counseling Center Directors, as we have worked hard to jointly prepare this statement. I am here with several Directors from CUNY.

We appreciate your continued advocacy for funding to support the mental health needs of students. This advocacy is particularly relevant given the ongoing mental health crisis and prevalence of university homicides and suicides, including deaths by suicide at CUNY. Most CUNY students are in the vulnerable age group for initial onset of serious mental health disorders and many are still addressing the trauma caused by the pandemic.

As campus mental health leaders, we would like to offer guidance on effectively meeting the mental health needs of our students.

We are requesting more permanent, full-time, licensed mental health professionals. We need these positions because counselors must carry with them institutional knowledge that helps build ongoing relationships with students, faculty and staff and helps to create a community of support. This is critical to student retention and degree completion. We already employ a high proportion of part-time staff and trainees. Over-reliance on part-time staffing at low hourly wages or on outside contracted services tends to fragment efforts and produce large overhead costs related to excessive planning, recruitment, hiring, training, supervision, and turnover. This results in compromised quality of services and insufficient continuity of care. These activities also burden existing counseling staff as well as other departments involved in hiring and onboarding, such as HR and IT.

***We are asking that you please fund additional full-time mental health lines, particularly on campuses where the ratio is below one counselor to one thousand students which is recommended by the International Accreditation of Counseling Services.*** As the COVID-relief funds are drying up, many of our centers are losing significant staffing, making this a vital moment to invest in our work. On June 30, we will lose around 40 FTE clinicians across the CUNY Counseling Centers. This equates to not being able to serve 13,000 students who need our help.

CUNY students' success enriches the economy and culture of New York City. We urge you to prioritize mental health service and re-evaluate the barriers that prevent us from hiring. This will allow us to meet the coming decade of post-pandemic demand for our services and will contribute to and make possible the success of our university, our city, and, most importantly, our students.

Sincerely yours,

The CUNY Counseling Center Directors