



### **Memo in Support of A.10509/S.8363**

The Coalition for Behavioral Health supports A.10509/S.8363, which would include the Commissioner of the Office of Addiction Services and Supports (OASAS) as a member of the disaster preparedness commission. Individuals served by OASAS have distinct needs that must be handled during disasters, and these concerns should be represented on the commission by the OASAS Commissioner.

The Coalition for Behavioral Health represents over 100 community-based behavioral health organizations, who collectively serve more than 600,000 New Yorkers annually with mental health and substance use issues. New York is currently facing a substance use epidemic, with thousands of New Yorkers dying annually from drug overdoses and alcohol-related causes.

Serving individuals with alcohol or substance use disorder is lifesaving work. Ensuring that individuals have ongoing access to treatment and harm reduction keeps our clients healthy and engaged in care. In times of disaster, these services are even more critical, as many other supports that individuals rely on disappear. Daily routines slip away, and individuals become more vulnerable to overdose and relapse.

OASAS should be included on the disaster preparedness commission to ensure that the needs of individuals with alcohol and substance use disorders, and the providers who serve them, are part of the state's planning and receive adequate attention during disasters.

We encourage the Governor to sign A.10509/S.8363 to ensure the needs of New Yorkers with alcohol and substance use disorders are included in disaster planning.