

New York State Senate and Assembly  
Joint Session on  
FY 2010-2011 Executive Budget for  
Human Services/Social Services  
February 10, 2010

Concern for Independent Living  
Ralph Fasano, Executive Director

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My name is Ralph Fasano and I am the Executive Director of Concern for Independent Living, Inc. Concern is a not-for-profit corporation that provides both housing and support services to over 500 individuals in over 200 sites in New York. Concern has been operating housing for persons with psychiatric disabilities for more than 24 years and we are the largest non-profit provider of housing for individuals and families with mental illness on Long Island. Concern's mission is to provide safe, affordable housing within the community to persons recovering from psychiatric and other disabilities and to low-income individuals and families; to offer supportive services; to foster independence, empowerment and recovery; and to reduce the stigma of mental illness to allow persons with psychiatric and other disabilities to live with independence, support and dignity.

#### SHFYA

The funding Concern receives from the Supportive Housing for Families and Young Adults program is used to serve 37 families, totaling 123 individuals. With this funding we are able to provide services that have helped them develop life skills needed for both parents and children to become functioning and productive members of their community. These services have helped make it possible for these families to overcome their challenges and to remain successfully in permanent housing rather than cycle back into homelessness.

This program provides housing and services to families where at least one adult has been diagnosed with a psychiatric disability. With the SHFYA funding we are able to provide both case management services for the identified adult participants and specialized family services to address the needs of the family unit and the children within the homes.

All of the families served by this program have experienced extreme challenges and their needs are often overwhelming to them. With at least one adult member who suffers from a serious and persistent mental illness, there can be many negative forces that place stress on the entire family unit. Examples include poverty, substance abuse, prolonged periods of separation due to hospitalizations or removal of children from the home, interruptions to educational and vocational progress, and homelessness. Successful intervention requires a multi-pronged approach in order to address the various needs of the parents, the children, and of the family as a whole.

Without SHFYA funding Concern cannot maintain the Case Management staff required to oversee this program. Families served in this program will risk losing their housing

and their services. The loss of housing and services would be devastating, and could result in relapse, hospitalization and/or homelessness. If just a couple of the families in this program become homeless, the costs of this action will far outweigh the total amount of funding that is currently in place.

### SRO Supportive Services

The funding Concern receives from the Single Room Occupancy program is used to serve 137 individuals with psychiatric disabilities. With this funding we are able to provide both housing and services to program participants, including case management services, medication management services, representative payee services, and employment services. These varied services are integral to participants' recovery by providing service planning, medication management, advocating on participants' behalfs, budgeting, and providing assistance in obtaining and sustaining employment, as well as other services.

This program provides an array of services to meet the varied needs of its participants. Like in our Family Program, these individuals have experienced extreme challenges including homelessness and some have a history of substance abuse, HIV/AIDS, domestic violence or other traumas. The services provided using the SRO funding brings these individuals closer to recovery and greater self-sufficiency.

Without SRO funding Concern cannot maintain the staff required to successfully oversee this program. Individuals served will risk losing their housing and their services. This loss would be devastating and could result in relapse, hospitalization, self-medication and homelessness.

It is important to note that the supportive services funded by both of these programs serve as matching funds for capital and rental grants from HUD and NYS. The loss of this funding puts us out of compliance with the contracts we have and jeopardizes the funding that was awarded for this housing.