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Strong Nonprofits Coalition To Albany Leaders: Pay Female Workers Fairly

*Governor’s Budget Fails To Include Critical Funding For Nonprofit Human Services Workers*

*More Than 80% Of Human Services Workers Are Women, 44% Are Women Of Color*

ALBANY, N.Y. — Today, Strong Nonprofits for a Better New York—a statewide coalition of more than 350 nonprofit human services providers—hosted a press conference at the State Capitol calling on Governor Cuomo to increase funding in the budget for the wages of hundreds of thousands of nonprofit human services workers. More than 80 percent of human services workers are women, and 44 percent of the workforce are women of color.

Strong Nonprofits for a Better New York is asking the State to fully fund the minimum wage on direct contracts, and to provide much-needed salary increases for human services workers who were not covered in last year’s direct care increase. These frontline workers deliver critical services and programs across New York State including homeless services, mental care and elder assistance—fields where workers are chronically underpaid, often due to the historical stigma of being so-called “women’s work.”

While the Cuomo Administration’s work to raise the minimum wage to $15-per-hour was admirable, his budget fails to fully fund this minimum wage increase. Strong Nonprofits is asking the state to add $23 million in the budget for the human services sector to fund the new $15 minimum wage for all. The coalition is also calling on Governor Cuomo and the State Legislature to invest $65 million for a wage adjustment for hundreds of thousands of human services workers that were left out of last year’s budget.
In addition to the press conference, the coalition also hosted a “Women in Human Services Hall of Fame” in honor of Women’s History Month. The Hall of Fame highlighted notable women in the human services sector from past to present times. Inductees to the hall of fame were nominated by legislators and community leaders from across New York. To see an online version of the Women in Human Services Hall of Fame, visit: www.strongnonprofitsny.org/halloffame

Senate Democratic Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins said, "An investment in the human services workforce is an investment in closing the gender pay gap. Women like those in the Human Services Hall of Fame are doing the hard work on the front lines to ensure their neighbors have opportunity and economic security. Let’s make sure that they have the same."

"I am proud to represent a district that is home to so many strong nonprofit organizations where women hold major leadership positions,” said Senator Velmanette Montgomery (S.D. 25). “These five women have devoted their time and energy to empowering others and I am so happy to see their work acknowledged here today. Our nonprofit community is on the front lines each day serving New Yorkers across the State. It is our responsibility as elected officials to support these important service providers in this year’s budget."

"New York's economic growth is tied to the investments we make in our workforce. While we have made great strides in raising the minimum wage, we must not overlook the current inequity faced by human services providers whose day to day work in our communities impact New Yorkers of all ages and from all walks of life,” said Assemblymember Nily Rozic (A.D. 25), Chair of the Task Force on Women's Issues. “I join the Strong Nonprofits coalition in their advocacy and urge the Governor to include the necessary funding in this year's budget.”

"We have to do better by women who are devoting their careers to human services in the non-profit sector. These are the women who are on the ground every day delivering essential services to New York residents who are in need,” said Assemblymember Yuh-Line Niou (A.D. 65). “Women in this field are underappreciated and underpaid, and we need to bring more attention to this issue. The Assembly continues to push for women's equality, and we need to make sure that women working in human services in the non-profit sector are part of the gender pay gap conversation.”

“I strongly support the efforts of Strong Nonprofits for Better New York to recognize the unsung heroes providing vital services across the state; individuals like Jennifer Perney,” said
Assemblymember Donna A. Lupardo (A.D. 123). “As the Child Care Resource and Referral Director of the Family Enrichment Network, she perseveres in spite of a lack of adequate investment in the childcare workforce.”

“We’re in Albany today to underscore that it’s past time to fully fund our human services sector and its overwhelmingly female, chronically underpaid workforce—the frontline staffers who barely earn a living wage while providing vital services like child and elder care and homelessness services,” says FPWA CEO and Executive Director, Jennifer Jones Austin. “It’s time to move beyond empty promises and shore up the arbitrary funding commitments that plague the sector—rewarding some while neglecting others for the same work. If the Governor and legislature are serious about closing the gender pay gap, an investment in the sector whose salaries they have significant control over must be made now.”

“It’s time for Albany to start giving women a fair shot,” said Allison Sesso, Executive Director of the Human Services Council. “Frontline human services employees are predominantly women, and nearly half are women of color. If we really care about pay equity, our State leaders need to step up and fully fund wages for the hundreds of thousands of women providing vital services for their communities on behalf of the government.”

"Human services nonprofits that contract with the State provide invaluable programs and services to our communities, but they cannot help families, children, and the elderly without adequate funding and support for their workers and infrastructure. The Governor is promoting a Women’s Equality Agenda and is seeking to address the gender pay gap, he has a perfect opportunity to address some of these issues appropriately during Women’s History Month. He can no longer pay lip service to a problem that he has the ability to fix,” said Ron Deutsch, executive director of Fiscal Policy Institute. "Over eighty percent of all human services workers are women and almost half are women of color. The majority of women human services workers are college-educated and the services they deliver require skilled dedication and compassion, but sadly almost sixty percent qualify for public assistance programs like Medicaid and SNAP to support their families. The Governor has failed to deliver a cost of living increase to these workers for eight years and has chosen not to increase state contracts to reflect the rising minimum wage. If he is serious about addressing the gender pay gap he needs to start in his own backyard. Enough is enough."

“On March 13th, Urban Pathways proudly stands as a member of Strong Nonprofits for a Better New York to recognize the notable women in human services in New York State who have
devoted themselves to the betterment of communities across New York State,” said Frederick Shack, CEO of Urban Pathways, Inc. “We also urge Governor Cuomo and the New York State Assembly and Senate to adopt a FY19 budget that truly recognizes the contributions of women in human services - including the 182 women at Urban Pathways - and provides overdue salary increases for a workforce that is more than 80 percent women."

"Now, more than ever, we are relying on Not-for-Profit Human Service Agencies, to fill the major gaps that exist from various federal cuts,” said Maria Dibble, Executive Director of the Southern Tier Independence Center. “Yet, the more we work to ensure that people don’t fall through the cracks, the more it seems that our needs and concerns are ignored. We require funds to offer decent wages when recruiting and then trying to retain quality workers, and we must support the sagging infrastructure of NY providers. If we are to honor a month that celebrates the achievement of Women, than we should fund the agencies that employ them in very high percentages."

“The New York Council of Nonprofits (NYCON) is proud to join the Strong Nonprofits for a Better New York Campaign in recognizing the immeasurable contributions women have made in the field of human services. Many of our member organizations are part of the human services sector, and they work exceptionally hard to provide care, hope and dignity to people in need. Our communities are healthier and stronger because many women (and men) choose the often-thankless, underpaid work of a human services worker, knowing that every day they have an opportunity to improve peoples’ lives,” said Doug Sauer, CEO of New York Council of Nonprofits.