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FIRST LADY CHIRLANE MCCRAY EXPANDS PARTNERSHIP TO PROMOTE MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLNESS IN BLACK COMMUNITIES WITH THE LAUNCH OF “BROTHERS THRIVE”

Historically Black men-led organizations will partner under Brothers Thrive to train 10,000 black men in Mental Health First Aid

NEW YORK, NY – First Lady Chirlane McCray today announced **Brothers Thrive**, a volunteer effort led by black men to promote mental health literacy in their communities. The First Lady will spearhead the coalition which brings together six national service organizations to raise awareness about mental illness, substance misuse, and the stigma associated with seeking treatment. Within its first year, Brothers Thrive will work to encourage a more culturally relevant mental health workforce as part of the recently created Mental Health Advisory Group, create safe spaces throughout the boroughs for conversations, support, and strategy building, and leverage the leadership of black men to encourage their networks to be trained in Mental Health First Aid. Brothers Thrive joins Sisters Thrive--launched in December 2017--as partnering efforts to support the needs of black communities throughout the city. The First Lady announced the partnership today alongside the representatives at a press conference which was followed by the first round of Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) trainings.

“Brothers Thrive represents the same strength we witnessed this past December with Sisters Thrive; unity, collaboration, and impact. Both initiatives mark the first time that a major city has tackled mental health with the collaboration of these notable organizations, and collectively, I believe their partnership will lead to more and better services for African-American, immigrant, and marginalized communities,” said **First Lady Chirlane McCray**. More than 550,000 men are members of the participating Brothers Thrive service organizations which include: Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc., Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Inc., Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, Phi Beta Sigma Fraternity, Inc., Iota Phi Theta Fraternity, Inc., and 100 Black Men. All of the organizations have notable health and wellness programs and have committed to using their collective resources to support Brothers Thrive. Black men are leaders. They know how best to overcome the challenges they face. I am honored to partner with, listen to, and learn from the brothers within our city.”

According to the National Alliance on Mental Illness, cultural biases can prevent many African-Americans from accessing health care services. A history of inadequate treatment, exploitive testing and a lack of cultural competence by health professionals may explain why [today, an estimated one-quarter of African-Americans seek mental health care](#) compared to 40 percent of white Americans. Brothers Thrive will work to encourage a national dialogue that eliminates these significant barriers to treatment.

Meanwhile, the First Lady is recognized nationally as a champion for mental health reform. Two years ago, she launched [ThriveNYC](#), the City's comprehensive plan to address mental illness and substance misuse. The First Lady has expanded this mission to nearly 200 cities that are working under the banner [Cities Thrive Coalition](#) to support a stronger, better funded and more integrated behavioral health system nationwide. Brothers Thrive will leverage existing resources of ThriveNYC to support volunteer efforts.

"We the men of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc. recognize the importance and support of the Brother's Thrive initiative. Mental health challenges among black and Latino men continue to be kept a secret in our communities and we must bring them to light. Through these trainings, we are equipping people with the tools they need," said **Lucien Metellus, Eastern Regional Vice President, Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc.**

"Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Inc. is committed to promoting mental health awareness as a critical part of its overall Health and Wellness cluster," said **Thomas L. Battles, Jr., Grand Polemarch, Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Inc.**

"Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, Inc. is honored to partner with First Lady Chirlane McCray on this great initiative to address mental health first aid in our communities. We will lend our assistance to help train and prepare selected individuals to more adequately confront and help eradicate this disease from those that suffer, often in shameful silence. Congratulations on this major undertaking that will directly help to close the glaring gaps of disparity with hands on impact," said **Antonio F. Knox, Sr., Grand Basileus of Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, Inc.**

"For far too long, too many families have been living and struggling with mental health challenges in the shadows of our society. As a brotherhood of conscious men actively serving our communities, Phi Beta Sigma Fraternity, Inc. is committed to letting those who live with mental illness know that they are not alone in this battle. Phi Beta Sigma is proud to partner with the Brothers Thrive initiative to help address Mental Illness, especially in the Africa-American community; where access to proper care can be limited. This partnership will be a game changer for the people of New York City and we are proud to be a part of it," said **Micheal E. Cristal, International President, Phi Beta Sigma Fraternity, Inc.**

"There are too many individuals who are living with undiagnosed depression and other mental health issues. Therefore the Founding Chapter of the One Hundred Black Men fully supports the incredible efforts of First Lady Chirlane McCray in dealing with this important issue" said **Michael Garner, OHBM, Inc. Of NY President**

"Brothers Thrive will mobilize the know-how, public service spirit, and commitment to uplift of all partners. I am particularly proud that my Omega Psi Phi brothers join in this effort. Building

upon ThriveNYC's work thus far, Brothers Thrive expands an already significant commitment to more healthful communities for all New Yorkers," said **New York State Senator Jesse Hamilton**. "I welcome this initiative, I welcome this effort to train 2,000 black men in Mental Health First Aid, and I applaud First Lady Chirlane McCray's continued dedication to charting a course towards better mental health, both in public policy and on the ground, in the everyday lives of our communities."

"I would like to commend New York City First Lady Chirlane McCray and the de Blasio administration for creating the Brothers Thrive initiative to mirror the Sister's Thrive collaboration founded in 2017," said **New York State Senator Leroy Comrie**. "Fraternal organizations, and others working to remove the stigma associated with mental health and substance abuse treatment is sorely needed in our community and I look forward to continuing to foster the partnerships necessary to ensure that all who need help can get it and not be ashamed to seek it."

"People in need of mental health services have faced stigma for too long," said **New York State Senator Gustavo Rivera**. "First Lady Chirlane McCray's work to challenge misconceptions and expand access by engaging communities that historically lacked adequate care is a significant step to breaking down the numerous barriers that prevent New Yorkers from addressing their mental health."

"Many young adults face problems that require professional help from mental health professionals. Early intervention is the most effective way to prevent difficulties later in life," said **Assistant Speaker of New York State Assembly Felix W. Ortiz**.

"As a member of the Assembly Committee on Mental Health, and a longtime advocate for funding mental health programs, making them more available, and educating the public to the issues, I salute our city's First Lady for her efforts and to the Brothers Thrive program. The more we publicize the need for better services - and reduce the stigma of seeking help - the better. Mental health issues need to be understood as a disease like any other physical affliction. Today's announcement is a giant step in that direction," said **Assemblyman Luis Sepulveda**.

"Stigma can regularly be the reason for men of color not addressing mental health concerns not getting help. However, through leadership, encouragement, awareness and support, we are breaking past any barriers to be healed," said **Assemblyman Michael Blake**. "I applaud First Lady McCray, my fellow Brothers of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc. and all collaborating organizations for launching #BrothersThrive, ensuring that through addressing mental health for men of color we continue #BuildingABetterBronx and a greater New York City."

"In communities of color, mental health conditions are stigmatized, which prevents people from accessing the services they need for the betterment of their health. As the Chair of the Committee on Mental Health, Disabilities, and Addiction, I would like to thank First Lady McCray for her investment in Brothers Thrive, as it will serve as a mechanism to promote mental health literacy in communities with histories of being medically underserved," said **Council Member Diana Ayala**.

“Ending the stigma of mental illness and educating more people about mental illness is critical to successfully addressing the dire need for mental health care, especially in our city’s black and brown communities. As the former operator of an 18-bed facility to mentally-ill substance abusers, a member of Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, and an elected representative of Bedford Stuyvesant and northern Crown Heights, I am proud to support this initiative, which I believe will make a profound positive impact on the lives of countless New Yorkers struggling with mental illness,” said **Council Member Robert Cornegy, Jr.**

“As the city ramps up its mental and behavioral health awareness efforts, it is critical that we promote the importance of wellness in communities of color,” said **Council Member Donovan Richards.** “We must break down all the barriers that are created by the stigma around mental illness and substance misuse to ensure that everyone in need is connected with the necessary services. I’d like to thank First Lady McCray for her sincere dedication to ending the mental health stigma in communities of color.”

About the Brothers Thrive Service Organizations

Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc.

[Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc.](#) is the first intercollegiate Black Greek Lettered Organization. Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity’s founders recognized the immeasurable contributions African American men could make to society when properly supported. The Fraternity initially served as a study and support group for minority students who faced racial prejudice, both educationally and socially at Cornell University, but grew to count among its members founders and influencers of institutions such as the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, The Crisis magazine, National Urban League and the National Association of Black Journalists. The Fraternity also led the charge in historic court cases such as Brown v. Board of Education, and Civil and Human Rights more broadly.

Kappa Alpha Psi

[Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Inc.](#) Kappa Alpha Psi, a college Fraternity, now comprised of functioning Undergraduate and Alumni Chapters on major campuses and in cities in the United States, Germany, the Republic of Korea, Bermuda, Japan, and South Africa was founded at Indiana University on January 5, 1911. The organization was created to raise the sights of collegians and stimulate them to accomplish unimaginable heights, fashioning achievement as its purpose. Kappa Alpha Psi works to unite college men of culture, patriotism and honor in a bond of fraternity.

Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, Inc.

[Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, Inc.](#) is the first international fraternal organization founded on the campus of a historically black college. For more than 100 years, Omega has continued to be on the front lines as a dedicated champion for civil rights and social action issues that affect and impact communities around the world. Omega stands on the Cardinal Principles of Manhood, Scholarship, Perseverance and Uplift and many notable Omega Men are recognized leaders in the arts, sciences, academics, athletics, business, civil rights, education, government and science sectors at the local, national and international level. Because of its great commitment to the wholeness of community, the Fraternity realized that mental health was a major issue for African

American men and implemented the "Brother You're On My Mind" initiative to provide a national platform to help address the needs through dialogue toward remedy. The Fraternity works to educate Omega members, their families and the community about the effects of depression and stress and the importance of seeking help for mental health challenges.

Phi Beta Sigma Fraternity, Inc.

[Phi Beta Sigma Fraternity, Inc.](#) is an international organization comprised of 150,000 college-educated men, and built primarily on the ideology of promoting Brotherhood, Scholarship and Service. The Fraternity was founded at Howard University in Washington, D.C., January 9, 1914, by three young African-American male students. Over its one hundred plus years of existence, the Fraternity has focused on improving the global community through dedicated service. This focus has compelled the development of the organization's four main programs: Bigger and Better Business, Education, Social Action and Sigma Beta Clubs. Through the lens of these programs, members determine how best they can serve their respective communities. The organization's partnerships with the American Cancer Society, March of Dimes, Center for Disease Control and Prevention, Boy Scouts of America and the Thurgood Marshall College Fund are examples of its efforts to address societal ills including health disparities and educational and developmental challenges for people of all backgrounds.

Iota Phi Theta Fraternity, Inc.

[Iota Phi Theta Sorority, Inc.](#) was founded on the steps of Hurt Gymnasium at Morgan State College, now Morgan State University, on Thursday September 19, 1963, by 12 prestigious men that were engaged members of their communities. Those 'non-traditional' students would go on to create the world's fifth largest predominantly African American social service Fraternity, geared towards initiatives such as health awareness. As we execute both, collegiate and post-collegiate programs, they stress the importance of self-education of one's mental and physical health by implementing national initiatives and programs such as Iota Phi Theta's Mens Health program and I-PhiT, which stands for Impacting Public Health Initiatives. These initiatives target the communities in which they so proudly serve.

100 Black Men, Inc.

[100 Black Men, Inc.](#) (The 100) improves the quality of life for the communities we serve. Mentoring is the core service delivery of The 100, the largest network of African American male mentors in the nation. We influence and transform the lives of underrepresented and disenfranchised youth, with a focus on African American youth. Through our platform of Mentoring The 100 Way[®] Across A Lifetime, we provide programmatic services in education, health and wellness, economic empowerment and leadership development, which makes a fundamental difference in the lives of the youth we touch and the communities we serve.

About Mental Health First Aid

MHFA is an eight-hour public education program that teaches individuals how to recognize and respond to signs of mental distress and substance misuse. Through ThriveNYC, any New Yorker can sign up to take the free [Mental Health First Aid course](#). Certification will be issued upon successful completion of the course. Each new person trained in MHFA is provided with the tools to better support others, empower individuals to seek treatment and make tangible steps towards eliminating mental health stigma. Brothers Thrive will leverage the strong, influential

networks of the eight participating organizations to increase visibility at the local level and encourage individuals to sign up for MHFA trainings.

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