



THE CITY OF NEW YORK
OFFICE OF THE MAYOR
NEW YORK, NY 10007

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: November 23, 2015
CONTACT: pressoffice@cityhall.nyc.gov, (212) 788-2958

**REACTIONS FROM ELECTED OFFICIALS: MAYOR DE BLASIO, FIRST LADY MCCRAY
RELEASE THRIVENYC: A MENTAL HEALTH ROADMAP FOR ALL**

Manhattan Borough President Gale A. Brewer said, "The ThriveNYC Mental Health Roadmap recognizes a key truth: helping New Yorkers to get the mental health care they need will help solve myriad problems at their source. Just as with Mayor de Blasio's investment in supportive housing, the Mental Health Roadmap is an investment in our city's people – and that's the kind of investment that always delivers returns."

"There are obvious implications of not dealing with mental health issues. We see them all around us. It's evident that we need to do more to overcome the stigma and help this population. I applaud the First Lady and the Mayor for their proactive approach and commend them for refusing to continue the reactive, govern-by-tragedy model that has brought us to today where we see this need in a critical way," said **Staten Island Borough President James Oddo**.

"All New Yorkers deserve access to quality, affordable mental health services, regardless of their income or background. This new plan will close gaps in service, expand outreach and ensure mental health treatment is more widely available," said **Congresswoman Nydia M. Velázquez**.

Congressman Dan Donovan said, "The science is clear: poor mental health is a dangerous and costly condition, and it can be treated. I'm hopeful that in the years to come, the Mayor's initiative has a meaningful impact on depression, suicides, and other mental illnesses that plague our city on a daily basis."

Congressman Eliot Engel said, "The measure of any great city should be how well it treats its most vulnerable citizens, and here in New York I know that we take the plight of those suffering from mental illness seriously. The statistics surrounding mental illness in NYC are staggering, and speak to a serious public health issue that cannot be ignored: 1 in 5 adult New Yorkers likely to experience a mental health disorder in any given year; 8 percent of NYC high school students attempt suicide; nearly \$14 billion in lost city revenue tied to depression and substance abuse; upwards of 70,000 emergency room visits each year as a result of substance abuse. These New Yorkers are crying out for our help, and I applaud Mayor de Blasio and First Lady McCray for heeding the call in such a comprehensive, and compassionate, way. The Mayor understands that those suffering from mental illness need our support, not our ire. The ThriveNYC plan he has introduced will improve the mental wellbeing for those suffering by ensuring everyone gets the help and treatment they need. The Mayor's leadership on this issue has been critical, and I thank him for his empathetic approach to solving the mental health crisis in New York."

"With the initiation of ThriveNYC, New Yorkers struggling with mental health issues can know that help is on the way," said **Congresswoman Carolyn B. Maloney**. "Mayor de Blasio's plan aims to close the treatment gaps, so that everyone who needs care can find care. I applaud this new initiative, and hope that it will serve as a model for other cities looking to improve services and change the conversation around mental health."

"I applaud the Mayor for his tireless efforts to improve the mental health and well-being of all New Yorkers. Many in our city struggle with poor mental health, which takes its toll on individuals, families and our economy. ThriveNYC takes a bold approach by tackling the signs of mental illness early, creating an open dialogue in our community, and closing treatment gaps that prevent equal access to care in every neighborhood," said **Congressman Charles Rangel**. "The mental health system will not be fixed overnight, but I am glad we are taking the right steps towards cultivating a new path to a happier, healthier future."

"Decades of inadequate mental health support have led to many of our most vulnerable – especially those of color – joining the ranks of the incarcerated and becoming lost in a dysfunctional and damaging justice system," said **State Senator Leroy Comrie**. "To reroute our mentally ill out of prisons, we must award adequate funding to mental health programs, create better pathways for accessing preventative care, and diffuse cultural stigmas by broadening access to information about mental illness across communities. I am glad Mayor de Blasio's proposed changes are honing in on these problems to offer better treatment to those in need, helping individuals, communities and this whole city to grow stronger, together."

State Senator Jesse Hamilton said, "I welcome this important plan of action to bolster mental health, both as ranking member on the New York State Senate Committee on Mental Health and Developmental Disabilities and as a New Yorker. On the state level, we need to be a proactive partner in advancing mental health across New York. Complex public health challenges require action on multiple levels, combating stigma, improving access to care, and raising awareness to let our family, friends, and neighbors know they are not alone. Policy makers, health professionals, and communities across New York must work together to decisively end the era of suffering in silence due to mental health challenges. ThriveNYC serves as a critical step in that right direction."

State Senator Jose Peralta said, "Clearly, individuals with mental health disorders need treatment, and offering this treatment to them is vital for a healthy and more vibrant city. We must ensure that all New Yorkers have equal access opportunities to mental health assistance regardless of their zip code. I support the Mayor's efforts to tackle this problem by making sure people that need treatment receive it."

State Senator Gustavo Rivera said, "I am very pleased that the City is taking steps towards implementing a comprehensive plan to effectively address mental health issues among New Yorkers. I commend Mayor de Blasio for putting forth a plan that includes proven public health principles to help those New Yorkers struggling with a mental illness heal."

State Senator James Sanders said, "Too often those suffering from mental health or emotional issues go unnoticed or untreated until it's too late, and that can be dangerous, not only for the person battling the illness, but for those around them as well. We must make taking care of these conditions as much a priority as caring for physical health. The steps outlined in the ThriveNYC plan including early intervention, increasing treatment options and lessening the stigma and misconceptions associated with mental health are a positive move forward in ensuring a better life for all New Yorkers."

"Access to treatment for those suffering with mental illness is crucial," said **State Senator Toby Ann Stavisky**. "In my district, the first-ever Korean mental health facility was opened by Korean Community Services and will provide culturally sensitive services to those in need. I am glad to see the Mayor's plan includes providing similar resources to those who require care that will be sensitive to their language, religious or cultural differences."

"A key element of the 'Roadmap' is to provide training for people in community agencies to respond effectively when faced with someone who has a mental health problem," said **Assembly Member Richard N. Gottfried, Chair of the Assembly Health Committee**. "Working with City agencies and community-based organizations, First Lady Chirlane McCray, Mayor de Blasio, and Health and Mental Hygiene Commissioner Mary T. Bassett are advancing an innovative and important public health program that will improve the quality of life for all New Yorkers."

"I applaud Mayor de Blasio for recognizing the importance of addressing mental issues in New York City, and for taking decisive action to combat mental illness. Promoting mental health and addressing problems early will have a significant positive impact on many New Yorkers and their families," said **Assembly Member Jeffrey Dinowitz**.

Assembly Member Jo Anne Simon said, "I am happy to support the Mayor's and the First Lady's ThriveNYC plan. Our City is long overdue for a comprehensive approach to address the multiple ways in which mental illness affects New Yorkers and does damage to their lives. We must act together to ensure that people in need get the services and treatment they need and to reduce the stigma and shame that keeps people from seeking help. ThriveNYC is a great first step in this battle."

"Stigma and unequal access to mental health care can have devastating consequences for New Yorkers in every neighborhood. ThriveNYC is a collaborative, community-based plan that will make real change for many New Yorkers. No one should struggle with untreated mental illness. I'm proud to partner with the Mayor to advance this initiative and put New York City at the forefront of mental health treatment," said **Assembly Member Daniel Quart**.

Assembly Member Robert J. Rodriguez said, "I'd like to thank First Lady Chirlane McCray and Mayor de Blasio for prioritizing the mental well-being of New Yorkers, through the development of ThriveNYC. I am optimistic that by providing robust mental health first aid training, expanding wrap-around services at community schools, and targeting high-needs communities with additional clinicians, we will continue to make progress in identifying and providing proper care for those in need."

Assembly Member Michael Cusick, said, "For far too long, discussing mental health has been considered taboo and as a result, countless New Yorkers suffer with depression, anxiety, and a whole array of treatable mental illnesses. Mental health issues affect every segment of our population, and solutions will only be found through cooperation and open lines of communication between the variety of individuals and organizations that care for those who are suffering. I applaud the efforts being made to make New York City a model for the nation in how we treat those dealing with a mental illness and look forward to partnering with the community groups, agencies, and care providers who are a part of these initiatives."

Assembly Member Latoya Joyner. "By instituting training and public awareness campaigns at the grassroots level – including new initiatives that can support the mental health and well-being of all New Yorkers, the new Mental Health Roadmap – ThriveNYC has the potential to help many in the Bronx and New York City that require assistance, but are too afraid, worried or do not know how to access treatment. I commend the work of New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio and First Lady Chirlane McCray for addressing this very important public health issue.

Assembly Member Francisco Moya said, "For too long, mental health issues have been ignored or swept under the rug. It is critical that mental health issues are not only de-stigmatized in the public consciousness, but also allocated the resources they require. This sweeping new plan will put New York on the forefront of the fight to improve mental health services. I commend Mayor Bill de Blasio for taking this bold step forward."

Assembly Member and Assistant Speaker Felix W. Ortiz said, "I commend the Mayor for this bold plan to address the mental wellness for all New Yorkers. As a former chair of the Assembly's Mental Health Committee, I know firsthand how vital mental healthcare is. ThriveNYC will have widespread impact. Great headway has been made in removing the stigma of mental health treatment and our residents should feel comfortable reaching out for mental health care. ThriveNYC will bring hope to our residents and will bring greater public health citywide."

Assembly Member Luis Sepulveda said, “For too long, people of all ages with mental health issues have had to endure the added burden to care posed by ignorance and stigma. Additionally, mental illnesses affect not only individuals, but also their extended families as a whole. Treatment, if there is any, is often walled off from a necessary consideration of the patient’s overall health and psychosocial needs. Thanks to the Mayor and the First Lady’s landmark initiative, a new approach will knock down these systemic barriers to successful treatment. This new mental health roadmap addresses mental illnesses across the spectrum, for all New Yorkers, in all communities. It entails dramatically increasing cooperation by – and enhanced communication between – all service providers, be they hospitals, government agencies, or the nonprofit sector. In so doing, we treat the whole person, and ensure that aftercare and long-term supports will be in place.”

Assembly Member Rebecca Seawright said, "The City administration is moving in the right direction by advancing a comprehensive program to address mental health disorders and to eliminate the stigma some still attach to the need to assure readily available counseling and treatment. This is a national need as every year one quarter of our country's population copes with mental health challenges, according to the National Institute of Mental Health. The City of New York should be in the lead in developing and implementing the services our communities deserve. I am very encouraged by today's announcement.”

Assembly Member David Weprin said, “As the Chair of the Task Force for People with Disabilities in the State Assembly, I applaud the Mayor for proposing a comprehensive road map to improve the mental health of all New Yorkers. I am pleased to see a newfound and necessary focus being placed on the mental well-being of New York City residents.”

“We can and must do more to support New Yorkers in need of mental health services,” said **Council Member Corey Johnson, Chair of the Council’s Committee on Health**. “With this initiative, First Lady Chirlane McCray and Mayor Bill de Blasio are displaying strong leadership, taking bold steps to close the divide between those who have adequate mental health services and those who do not. I especially want to give thanks for First Lady McCray for her relentless, passionate and focused advocacy on behalf of our most vulnerable in New York City. I also want to thank Health Commissioner Dr. Mary Bassett and NYC Health and Hospitals President CEO Dr. Ram Raju for leading on this issue.”

"New York City is leading the way to bring mental health out of the shadows and into the light. This roadmap shows that the administration and the City Council are united in our commitment to ensuring access to care and quality treatment for all New Yorkers whose lives are affected by mental illness. Thank you Mayor de Blasio and First Lady Chirlane McCray for making mental health a priority from day one. Together we can shed the negative stigma that surrounds mental health and lead people to services that can help them," said **Council Member Andrew Cohen, Chair of the Committee on Mental Health**.

Council Member Andy King, co-Chair of the Black, Latino & Asian Caucus, said, "We all know of someone who has struggled with mental health problems at some point in their life. We know that mental health issues are treatable and recovery is possible with help. We’ve got to get rid of the stigma associated with mental health issues which forces too many New Yorkers, particularly in communities of color, to struggle in silence instead of seeking help. The brain is a complicated part of our body, and, just like any part of our body that falters or is no longer healthy, proper medical care is needed to make it healthy. I want to commend Mayor de Blasio for launching this new mental-health initiative that will be readily accessible to all New Yorkers.”

Council Member Ydanis Rodriguez said, “Mental Health is of critical importance for the safety and wellbeing of all New Yorkers. We have seen in many of our communities how mental illness has left profound impacts on the lives of our constituents, especially in communities where residents are living at or below the poverty line. I applaud the de Blasio Administration for bring the issues that afflict New Yorkers to the forefront and look forward to working in partnership to advocate for resources and policies to bring solutions for these issues.”

Council Member Julissa Fererras-Copeland said, “Mental health disorders affect an enormous number of New Yorkers, and yet remains a conversation in whispers due to feelings of shame and isolation. Every New Yorker has either battled a mental illness or knows a loved one who has. I applaud the Mayor for putting a spotlight on this issue, and dedicating resources to understanding and helping those New Yorkers battling the dark parts of their minds. As a city, we want anyone facing challenges with mental illness to know that they are not alone.”

Council Member Robert E. Cornegy, Jr. said, "I cannot applaud NYC's First Lady Chirlane McCray enough for tackling the critical issue of mental health care and coordination, which undergirds so many public and private struggles in our communities. The ripple effects of a successful refashioning of the City's programs in this area will be enormous and profound, impacting individuals, families, and our public discourse concerning issues ranging from policing to homelessness. I, for one, am eager to walk into this new period of greater openness and hope."

Council Member Mathieu Eugene said, “Access to proper mental health care is essential to overall wellness and too many New Yorkers are suffering from mental illnesses because they lack access to services. ThriveNYC – a plan that vows to provide New Yorkers across the boroughs with equal access to mental health services – is a huge step forward for our city. I commend Mayor Bill de Blasio and New York City First Lady Chirlane McCray for their dedication to making sure that proper mental health care is readily available to all New Yorkers.”

Council Member Vanessa Gibson said, “The burden of mental illness and its cascading impact on the quality of life of individuals, families, and our community is a serious public health matter, and one that requires a rapid systemic response. Although mental illness knows no bounds, stressors such as housing instability, poverty, and lack of access to preventative healthcare has made low income New Yorkers less able to treat and manage mental disease and more likely to suffer its debilitating impacts. I thank Mayor de Blasio and First Lady Chirlane McCray for highlighting the sober reality of mental illness in our city while seeking to destigmatize these diseases and make it easier for all New Yorkers to get the care they need. I urge anyone suffering from depression or any other mental illness to step out of the shadows and seek help.”

Council Member Debi Rose said, "For too long, mental health issues have rarely been discussed for fear of embarrassment or stigma. We know from experience that ignoring any health issue, mental or physical, only makes the problem worse. First Lady Chirlane McCray is working hard to erase that stigma, to make mental health care as widely discussed and available as physical health care. One of my best friends has struggled with mental health issues all her life, and I served for years on the board of the Staten Island Mental Health Society, so I understand this issue well and have worked to increase access to all health care, mental and physical. I commend the Mayor and First Lady for their commitment to expanding mental health care and will work with them to implement NYC Thrive on the North Shore of Staten Island."

Council Member Ben Kallos said, "Mental health can't be ignored and is finally getting the attention it deserves thanks to Mayor Bill de Blasio and First Lady Chirlane McCray."

Council Member Peter Koo said, “Left untreated, mental illness can be devastating to not only individuals, but to families and entire communities. As a city that looks out for one another, it must be incumbent on us to proactively recognize, prevent and treat mental health challenges in New York City. Many thanks to Mayor de Blasio for taking steps to address the city’s mental health crisis.”

Council Member Mark Levine said, "Every New Yorker deserves quality and compassionate care against the ravages of mental illness. The results of this sobering report make clear that there is much more we have to do to meet this growing challenge. Tens of thousands of students in our schools need ongoing support, and a shamefully low number of New Yorkers with depression actually receive care for it. With the costs of mental illness mounting for our city, this report demands we come together around bold solutions.”

Council Member Steve Levin said, “Too many New Yorkers suffer from treatable mental health problems alone and in silence. ThriveNYC is a plan to change this dynamic and make mental health a priority by using data-driven approaches, preventive care and early intervention strategies, and community partnerships to identify and support New Yorkers who need help. Mental health isn’t just an individual struggle. These issues affect the health and wellness of entire communities and can have wide-ranging impacts on city services, education and the local economy. I’m glad that the administration recognizes the importance of these challenges and is bringing forward an innovative strategy to confront them.”

###