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## **NEW YORK CITY RECOGNIZED AS INNOVATIVE GLOBAL LEADER ON MENTAL HEALTH REFORM**

*International City and urban Regional CoLLaborativE (I-CIRCLE) calls on cities around the world to advance the mental health of their residents by adopting efforts similar to ThriveNYC*

**NEW YORK**—New York City’s unprecedented efforts to change the culture around mental health and improve New Yorkers’ access to services and support have been recognized as an innovative model for cities across the globe by the International City and urban Regional CoLLaborativE (I-CIRCLE). [ThriveNYC](#) was launched in November 2015 by New York City’s First Lady, Chirlane McCray to change the way City government and its many partners address community mental health needs, and help dismantle the stigma associated with seeking treatment. With 54 initiatives backed by an \$850 million investment over the first four years, ThriveNYC is the most comprehensive mental health plan of any city or state in the nation. [I-CIRCLE](#) announced today that it has endorsed and will promote the six key guiding principles and framework of ThriveNYC.

“With the launch of ThriveNYC two years ago, we set out to change the culture around mental health and deliver services where people live, learn, work and worship,” said **First Lady Chirlane McCray, who spearheads ThriveNYC**. “Mental illness and substance misuse are common -- one in five people suffer from some kind of challenge, but do not get the help they need because of stigma or because they have difficulty finding appropriate services. Although we have received a great deal of positive feedback for ThriveNYC’s public health approach, our work has just begun. We are committed to building a culturally competent mental health system that meets the needs of all New Yorkers. We are honored to be recognized by I-CIRCLE as a model for other cities. And, we stand ready and willing to share all we have learned with our sister and brother cities around the world.”

“Many of us recognize the need to use new approaches to build effective Mental Health systems in cities and urban regions. ThriveNYC is using the best population and public health concepts as key principles. We believe that linking I-CIRCLE with ThriveNYC will result in a global collaboration of cities to work and share these new ideas,” said **Fran Silvestri, President and CEO of the International Initiative for Mental Health Leadership**.

"ThriveNYC launched as a local solution to a mental health crisis facing cities across the globe. Two years in, we are finally starting to see change take hold in New York City, with more New Yorkers getting help than ever before -- at senior centers, hospitals, community-based organizations and beyond. I am grateful that these 54 initiatives may bring hope to people suffering in other parts of the country and the world. We owe this success to the visionary leadership of Chirlane McCray, who has helped bring mental health out of the shadows and make care available to all," said **Richard Buery, Deputy Mayor for Strategic Policy Initiatives**.

The stigma of mental health has afflicted our nation for far too long. Americans with depression, anxiety or any other mental health issues should freely ask for help and openly discuss their struggles. ThriveNYC is a groundbreaking roadmap to change the culture surrounding on mental illness. The New York City Council is proud to support ThriveNYC's goals and needs through the Council's Mental Health Initiatives, a \$13 million investment in programming and services to New Yorkers experiencing mental health issues. Because of ThriveNYC's success, I-CIRCLE had taken note and will urge other municipalities to follow suit. I thank First Lady Chirlane McCray for championing the mental health conversation and Mayor Bill de Blasio and his administration for the devotion to this critical cause," said **Speaker Melissa Mark-Viverito**.

I-CIRCLE made the announcement today during the second annual Cities Thrive Conference. First Lady McCray spearheads the [Cities Thrive Coalition](#) that brings together some of the nation's best advocates to develop innovative programs, creates an ongoing conversation and pushes federal partners to make mental health and substance misuse a top priority. Since the coalition's launch last November, nearly 200 cities from all 50 states, Washington D.C. and Puerto Rico have joined to share best practices and advocate for a better funded, more integrated behavioral health system – working through the key ThriveNYC principles. Several cities and urban regions have been inspired to adopt this broader view of mental health reform at the local level, including London, England's recent launch of "Thrive London" in July 2017.

"Under Mayor Bill de Blasio and First Lady Chirlane McCray, New York City has seen an unprecedented investment in mental health and substance use services," said **Dr. Mary T. Bassett, Commissioner of the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene**. "I encourage my fellow health commissioners in cities across the world to consider how they can reduce stigma, increase access to care, and support the mental health of their constituency."

"We think cities are uniquely positioned to drive the kinds of change needed to finally approach mental health fully given the public health challenge that it is," said **Gary Belkin, MD, PhD, MPH, Executive Deputy Commissioner of the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene**. "The positive response across the U.S. and increasingly the globe to what we've started here in New York City makes it possible to have a shared language for a movement among cities to share what they learn and improve what they do."

"ThriveNYC sets out a clear message for all of us leading mental health forward - that mental health and well-being are critical assets for a 21st century city, which needs attention from the very top as well as across most sectors of society. Under ThriveNYC's leading inspiration, the US and the international community of mental health leaders have come together to start driving

their cities and urban regional systems to be smarter and more ethically sound. Building a solid and sustainable structure of governance that is firmly based on the six principles is a critical achievement. We, at IIMHL and in Sweden, look forward to working together with NYC and all other cities that want to share and learn about how we build human habitats for mental health and wellbeing, because our best work will be when we do it together,” said **Dr. Fredrik Lindencrona, Ph.D., Chair of the International Initiative for Mental Health Leadership Sponsoring Countries Leadership Group and Project Lead for the IIMHL 2018.**

“More people live in urban settings than ever before in our history, which makes cities a vital focal point for efforts to promote mental health and well-being. Some cities have made strides with evidence-based models to build mental health, and many are starting this work and looking to collaborate. In Toronto, we are working to build a mentally health city initiative and our group finds I-CIRCLE a powerful forum for sharing evidence and experience,” said **Robert Moore, Executive Director of the Provincial System Support Program at the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health in Toronto, Ontario, Canada.**

“Internationally there is a new and more inclusive understanding of mental health, one which recognizes the importance of our habitat in protecting mental health and promoting recovery and healing,” said **Martin Rogan, Chief Executive Officer of Mental Health Ireland.** “It is no longer valid to simply locate the concern within the individual, but is more helpful to see the whole person in their life context, community and environment. In Ireland, we wish to replicate the success of our U.S. colleagues, and while our cities are smaller, the principle and models demonstrated are scalable and will resonate well in most urban settings. Working with the mandate and support of the Mayor's Office, ThriveNYC has shown how enlightened cities can embrace mental health principles to promote vitality, inclusion, economic benefits and hope. This is the future.”

According to the World Health Organization, approximately one in four people in the world will be affected by a mental or neurological disorder at some point in their lives with nearly two-thirds of people with a known mental health disorder never seeking help from a professional. These statistics bear out similarly in New York City, with at least one in five New Yorkers likely to experience a mental illness in any given year, and more than half of adults living with mental illness report not being able to access the treatment they need.

ThriveNYC set forth a plan to make it easier for New Yorkers to get the treatment they need and improve overall mental well-being. ThriveNYC’s six guiding principles for achieving long-term change emerged through a citywide feedback group process, expert advisory input, and scientific literature and evidence review:

- **Change the culture** by making mental health everybody’s business and having an open conversation about mental health.
- **Act early** to prevent, intervene more quickly and give New Yorkers more tools to weather challenges.

- **Close treatment gaps** by providing equal access to care for New Yorkers in every neighborhood.
- **Partner with communities** to embrace their wisdom and strength and to collaborate for culturally competent solutions.
- **Use data better** to address gaps and improve programs.
- **Strengthen government’s ability to lead** by coordinating an unprecedented effort to support the mental health of all New Yorkers.

“Mental Health America commends NYC and its Cities Thrive initiative for leading the way and acting Before Stage 4,” said **Paul Gionfriddo, President and CEO of Mental Health America**. “MHA is honored to work to translate these best practices and findings to children and families across America.”

“NYC recognizes the importance of leadership and collaboration in advancing mental health equity. Cities Thrive is cultivating a model of coalition-building and knowledge exchange needed to transform our society to one where all people have the opportunity to flourish,” said **Glenda Wrenn, MD, MSHP, Director of the Kennedy-Satcher Center for Mental Health Equity at Morehouse School of Medicine**.

“ThriveNYC embodies the thoughtful policy approach to the mental health challenges that confront our family, friends, and neighbors. Informed by insights of clinicians and advocates, ThriveNYC renews our collective focus on mental health as an integral part of public health. ThriveNYC will assist many more communities ensuring that fewer people feel isolated, fewer families feel overwhelmed, and fewer neighborhoods face trauma unaided. Thanks to First Lady of New York City Chirlane McCray, Mayor Bill De Blasio, and all the public and private sector leaders who join in contributing to ThriveNYC success; I-CIRCLE recognition is richly deserved. I join in celebrating this outstanding achievement,” said **State Senator Jesse Hamilton**.

**State Senator Liz Krueger** said, "ThriveNYC has proven to be an important program to increase access to mental health services in our city. The First Lady’s leadership has been instrumental in changing the culture around mental health, and meeting people where they are to provide services in the places they live and work. Congratulations to all those involved in making ThriveNYC a success."

“ThriveNYC’s comprehensive initiative is unparalleled,” said **Council Member Andrew Cohen**. “It targets the numerous obstacles to care that people may face and ensures that if you seek treatment you will find it, no matter who you are. Mental health affects us all, and I applaud ThriveNYC for addressing that. I’m pleased that the program is getting the recognition it deserves.”

**About the International City and urban Regional CoLaborativE (I-CIRCLE)**

I-CIRCLE is an international collaborative within the International Initiative for Mental Health Leadership that brings cities and urban regions together to problem-solve and spread innovations in support of mental health and well-being. IIMHL comprises eight countries including Australia, England, Canada, New Zealand, Republic of Ireland, Scotland, Sweden and the United States of America. IIMHL organizes systems for international networking, innovation sharing and problem solving across countries and agencies. Effective leadership will promote the best possible conditions for mental health in all sectors and deliver the best possible outcomes for people who use mental health and addiction services as well as their families.

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