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COMMENTS REGARDING EXECUTIVE BUDGET REQUEST FOR FY 2012-13

GOOD AFTERNOON. THANK YOU FOR THE OPPORTUNITY TO COMMENT ON THE GOVERNOR'S PROPOSED BUDGET FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF MENTAL HYGIENE (DMH). THESE ARE EXCITING AND CHALLENGING TIMES. EXCITING BECAUSE OF THE COMMITMENT OF GOVERNOR CUOMO TO EXPAND CROSS SYSTEMS COLLABORATION AND COOPERATION TO ADDRESS THE MULTIPLE HUMAN SERVICE NEEDS OF THE PEOPLE OF NEW YORK STATE WITH MENTAL DISABILITIES EFFECTIVELY AND EFFICIENTLY. CHALLENGING BECAUSE OF THE FISCAL PRESSURES ON STATE RESOURCES AND THE INERTIA THAT EXISTS IN STATE GOVERNMENT.

I APPLAUD GOVERNOR CUOMO'S INITIATIVE TO FOCUS ON ELIMINATING ABUSE WITHIN THE OPWDD SERVICE SYSTEM AND TO AGGRESSIVELY PURSUE TERMINATION AND OTHER VIABLE DISCIPLINARY ACTIONS TO WEED OUT BAD APPLES. AS THE FORMER DIRECTOR OF THE BROOME DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES SERVICES OFFICE (DDSO) I CAN ATTEST TO THE FRUSTRATIONS WE EXPERIENCED IN ATTEMPTING TO TERMINATE EMPLOYEES WHO WERE ABUSING THE PEOPLE WITH WHOM THEY HAD THE PRIVILEGE TO WORK.

GOVERNOR CUOMO HAS PROPOSED TO REFORM HOW STATE GOVERNMENT OPERATES. HE PROPOSES BUDGET LANGUAGE GIVING HIM BROAD AUTHORITY TO MOVE RESOURCES WITHIN AND BETWEEN AGENCIES TO ACHIEVE EFFICIENCIES. PROPOSED ARTICLE 7 LANGUAGE AUTHORIZES THE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH (DOH), OFFICE OF MENTAL HEALTH (OMH), OFFICE OF ALCOHOL AND SUBSTANCE ABUSE SERVICES (OASAS) AND THE OFFICE FOR PEOPLE WITH DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES (OPWDD) TO ESTABLISH "OPERATING, REPORTING AND CONSTRUCTION REQUIREMENTS AND JOINT SURVEY INSTRUMENTS TO DEMONSTRATE THE JOINT PROVISION OF SERVICES AMONG EFFECTED AGENCIES; MEET STANDARDS JOINTLY ESTABLISHED BY THE AGENCIES; AND, OTHERWISE WAIVE OR STREAMLINE EXISTING REQUIREMENTS TO FACILITATE THE EFFECTIVE AND EFFICIENT DELIVERY OF SERVICES."

WHILE HIS GOALS ARE LAUDABLE, THE LEGISLATURE NEEDS TO REQUIRE MORE SPECIFICITY TO KNOW HOW GOVERNOR CUOMO INTENDS TO USE THIS AUTHORITY. THE LEGISLATURE SHOULD, IN MY OPINION, DETERMINE HOW THE GOVERNOR PLANS TO USE ENTITIES LIKE THE INTER-OFFICE COORDINATING COUNCIL (IOCC) AND THE MOST INTEGRATED SETTING COORDINATING COUNCIL (MISCC) TO IMPLEMENT THIS AGENDA.

GOVERNOR CUOMO HAS PROPOSED CENTRALIZING CERTAIN ADMINISTRATIVE FUNCTIONS; TO ELIMINATING THE DDSO CONSTRUCT AND CONSOLIDATING DDSO'S INTO FEWER, LARGER REGIONAL CATCHMENT AREAS THAT WILL COINCIDE WITH DOH AND OMH REGIONS TO FACILITATE COORDINATION IN MEETING INDIVIDUAL NEEDS. IN ADDITION, THE GOVERNOR PROPOSES TO EXPAND THE NUMBER OF SMALL COMMUNITY RESIDENTIAL OPTIONS FOR PEOPLE WITH DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES. WHILE THIS APPEARS TO MAKE SENSE, THE POTENTIAL FOR ABUSE IN A MORE CENTRALIZED ADMINISTRATIVE CONSTRUCT WITH A MORE DECENTRALIZED AND SCATTERED SERVICE STRUCTURE IS APPARENT. IT HAS BEEN MY EXPERIENCE THAT CENTRAL OFFICE PERCEPTIONS CAN NEGATIVELY IMPACT LOCAL SERVICE DELIVERY AND THE HEALTH AND SAFETY OF THE PEOPLE BEING SERVED.

AS AN EQUAL BRANCH OF GOVERNMENT, THE LEGISLATURE HAS AN OBLIGATION TO ENSURE REALLOCATION OF RESOURCES IS APPROVED BY THE LEGISLATURE CONSISTENT WITH THE STATE CONSTITUTION, STATE LAWS AND LEGISLATIVE INTENT. WHILE WE HAVE A NEW EXECUTIVE COMMITTED TO A REFORM AGENDA, THERE REMAIN SEASONED BUREAUCRATS WITHIN THE STATE AGENCIES WHO WILL PASSIVELY RESIST THE GOVERNOR'S REFORM PLATFORM AND WAIT HIM OUT. THESE BUREAUCRATS HAVE BEEN PART OF THE PROBLEM FOR TOO LONG. THE LEGISLATURE MUST ENHANCE ITS EXECUTIVE OVERSIGHT FUNCTION TO HELP GOVERNOR CUOMO ENSURE THAT HIS PROPOSED RESTRUCTURING WILL ACTUALLY IMPROVE THE LIVES OF PEOPLE WITH DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES, MANY OF WHOM HAVE OTHER DISABILITIES, AND RESULT IN MORE EFFICIENT USE OF FISCAL RESOURCES BETWEEN AND WITHIN AGENCIES. REQUIRE SPECIFIC GOALS, OBJECTIVES AND REALISTIC TIMETABLES AND CONTINUALLY ASSESS THEIR VALIDITY. MONITOR THE IMPACTS OF ACROSS THE BOARD SPENDING CUTS AND HIRING FREEZES ON THE SERVICE SYSTEM. SEND STAFF TO MAKE UNANNOUNCED SITE VISITS TO REVIEW THE EFFICACY

OF PROGRAMS AND ENSURE THAT THE HEALTH AND SAFETY OF THE MOST FRAGILE MEMBERS OF OUR SOCIETY ARE PROTECTED.

IN ORDER TO PUT MY REMARKS INTO PERSPECTIVE, I WOULD LIKE TO BRIEFLY DESCRIBE MY HISTORY WITH THE MENTAL HYGIENE SERVICE SYSTEM IN NEW YORK. IN THE FALL OF 1976 I WAS HIRED AS THE SENIOR ANALYST FOR MENTAL HYGIENE POLICY BY THE ASSEMBLY MAJORITY WAYS AND MEANS COMMITTEE.

ONE OF MY FIRST ASSIGNMENTS ON BEHALF OF THE ASSEMBLY MAJORITY WAS TO NEGOTIATE GOVERNOR CAREY'S PROPOSED LEGISLATION REORGANIZING THE DEPARTMENT OF MENTAL HYGIENE INTO THE OFFICES WE KNOW TODAY. AT THAT TIME, WHILE THE LEGISLATURE RECOGNIZED THE NEED TO MOVE SERVICES FOR DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED INDIVIDUALS FROM UNDER THE AUSPICES OF WHAT WAS, PRIMARILY A MENTAL HEALTH DRIVEN SYSTEM, IT ALSO RECOGNIZED THAT THERE WAS A NEED FOR AN INTER-OFFICE COORDINATING COUNCIL (IOCC) WITHIN THE DMH TO HELP ENSURE THAT THE COMMISSIONERS WITHIN DMH WORKED TOGETHER TO ADDRESS THE IDENTIFIED NEEDS OF PERSONS WITH MULTIPLE MENTAL DISABILITIES.

IN ORDER TO ENSURE EFFICIENCIES IN OPERATIONS AND FACILITATE CROSS SYSTEMS COLLABORATION, THE RESEARCH INSTITUTES OF THE OFFICES WERE PLACED UNDER THE IOCC TO FACILITATE CROSS SYSTEMS RESEARCH COLLABORATION. THE IOCC ALSO HOUSED THE INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY FUNCTIONS OF THE OFFICES TO REDUCE THE POSSIBILITY OF EACH OFFICE CREATING ITS OWN COSTLY, INCOMPATIBLE INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY SYSTEM. A PLANNING PROCESS WAS ESTABLISHED IN STATUTE TO ENSURE THAT GOALS, OBJECTIVES AND RELATED SERVICES WERE DEVELOPED BASED UPON LOCAL NEEDS AND PRIORITIES.

OVER THE YEARS, UNDER SUBSEQUENT ADMINISTRATIONS, THIS CONSTRUCT WAS DISMANTLED. EACH OFFICE TOOK CONTROL OF ITS RESEARCH INSTITUTES AND ESTABLISHED ITS OWN INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY SYSTEMS. THE IOCC, AS AN OPERATIONAL ENTITY, FUNCTIONALLY CEASED TO EXIST. THE PLANNING PROCESS REQUIRED BY LAW WAS IGNORED.

THIS LED TO A FRAGMENTATION OF THE PLANNING, DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION OF SERVICES FOR PERSONS WITH MENTAL DISABILITIES. GAPS IN SERVICES FOR PEOPLE WITH MULTIPLE DISABILITIES WERE EXACERBATED AS EACH OFFICE WITHIN DMH PROCEEDED TO DEVELOP ITS OWN REGULATIONS AND FUNDING MECHANISMS INDEPENDENTLY OF ONE ANOTHER.

IN LATE DECEMBER, 1979, AT THE REQUEST OF THE SPEAKER OF THE ASSEMBLY, I CONDUCTED UNANNOUNCED VISITS TO NEW YORK CITY BASED STATE OPERATED PSYCHIATRIC CENTERS WITH PLAIN CLOTHED STATE POLICE OFFICERS AND A MEDIA TEAM. I PRODUCED AND MODERATED A DOCUMENTARY IDENTIFYING A NUMBER OF SERIOUS PROBLEMS IN NEED OF CORRECTION, THE ONLY TIME IN THE HISTORY OF THE STATE LEGISLATURE THAT THIS HAS BEEN DONE. WHILE THE VIDEO WAS NEVER RELEASED TO THE PUBLIC DUE TO CONCERNS OF A SPECIAL INTEREST CONSTITUENCY, POSITIVE CHANGES WERE INSTITUTED AT ALL STATE OPERATED PSYCHIATRIC CENTERS. IN 1980 I LEFT THE ASSEMBLY TO ENTER THE PRIVATE SECTOR.

IN 2001, I RETURNED AS THE PRINCIPAL ANALYST FOR MENTAL HYGIENE POLICY FOR THE ASSEMBLY MAJORITY. RECOGNIZING THAT THE COMMISSIONERS OF THE OFFICES WITHIN DMH WERE NOT ACTING COLLABORATIVELY, I DRAFTED LEGISLATION CREATING AN INDEPENDENT CHAIRPERSON OF THE IOCC WITH AUTHORITY WITH REGARD TO SERVING PERSONS WITH MULTIPLE DISABILITIES. THIS LEGISLATION PASSED THE ASSEMBLY IN 2002 AND 2004 AND PASSED THE SENATE IN 2003, HOWEVER IT DID NOT PASS BOTH HOUSES IN THE SAME SESSION.

UPON MY RETURN TO THE ASSEMBLY IN 2001, UNDER THE LEADERSHIP OF THEN ASSEMBLY MENTAL HEALTH COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN MARTY LUSTER, I SPEARHEADED THE ASSEMBLY MENTAL HEALTH COMMITTEE REVIEW OF THE ADULT HOME INDUSTRY, DRAFTED LEGISLATION AND AUTHORED A REPORT REGARDING THE IMPACTS ON PEOPLE LIVING IN ADULT HOMES. THIS PROCESS ULTIMATELY LED TO A CONSENT AGREEMENT BY GOVERNOR CUOMO'S ADMINISTRATION TO RELOCATE AND IMPROVE THE LIVES OF PEOPLE LIVING IN ADULT HOMES.

UNDER THE LEADERSHIP OF THEN ASSEMBLY MENTAL HEALTH COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN PETER M. RIVERA, I RESEARCHED THE USE OF

ELECTRO-CONVULSIVE THERAPY (ECT) BY THE OFFICE OF MENTAL HEALTH. ASSEMBLYMAN FELIX ORTIZ, PRESENT CHAIR OF THE ASSEMBLY MENTAL HEALTH COMMITTEE ALSO ACTIVELY PARTICIPATED IN THIS REVIEW. I COORDINATED PUBLIC HEARINGS, AUTHORED A REPORT AND DRAFTED LEGISLATION TO ADDRESS IDENTIFIED ISSUES OF CONCERN RESULTING IN REGULATORY CHANGES BY OMH REGARDING THE USE OF ECT.

IN NOVEMBER, 2003, TWENTY-FIVE YEARS AFTER THE CREATION OF THE SEPARATE OFFICES WITHIN DMH, A MENTAL HYGIENE TASK FORCE WAS ESTABLISHED TO EVALUATE THE DELIVERY OF MENTAL HYGIENE SERVICES IN NEW YORK STATE UNDER THE LEADERSHIP OF ASSEMBLYMAN PETER M. RIVERA, THEN CHAIRMAN OF THE ASSEMBLY MENTAL HEALTH COMMITTEE. THE TASK FORCE WAS COMPRISED OF OVER 50 MEMBERS REPRESENTING CONSUMERS, FAMILIES, ADVOCATES, SERVICE PROVIDERS, UNIONS AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS. I HAD THE PRIVILEGE TO SERVE AS STAFF TO THE TASK FORCE. IN FEBRUARY, 2005, ASSEMBLYMAN RIVERA ISSUED THE TASK FORCE REPORT, ENTITLED AN EVALUATION OF THE DELIVERY OF MENTAL HYGIENE SERVICES IN NEW YORK STATE WHICH CONTAINED A NUMBER OF RECOMMENDATIONS, INCLUDING STRENGTHENING INTERGOVERNMENTAL COORDINATION. ALL OF THESE LEGISLATIVE OVERSIGHT INITIATIVES LED TO IMPROVEMENTS IN THE MENTAL HYGIENE SERVICE DELIVERY SYSTEM.

IN 2007, THEN GOVERNOR SPITZER DIRECTED THE COMMISSIONERS WITHIN DMH AND THE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH (DOH) TO CONDUCT A SERIES OF PEOPLE FIRST LISTENING FORUMS ACROSS NEW YORK STATE. THESE FORUMS PROVIDED AN OPPORTUNITY FOR INDIVIDUALS WITH MULTIPLE DISABILITIES AND THEIR CAREGIVERS TO DESCRIBE THEIR EXPERIENCES IN NAVIGATING STATE AND LOCAL SERVICE SYSTEMS.

ONE OUTCOME OF THESE FORUMS WAS THE DECISION BY THE COMMISSIONERS OF THE OFFICES WITHIN DMH TO REINVIGORATE THE IOCC. AN ORGANIZATIONAL FRAMEWORK WAS ESTABLISHED. TWO COMMITTEES WERE FORMED UNDER THE AUSPICES OF THE IOCC, THE PLANNING COMMITTEE WITH THE COUNCIL OF LOCAL MENTAL HYGIENE DIRECTORS ACTING AS CO-CHAIR, AND THE PROGRAM COMMITTEE OF WHICH I WAS A MEMBER, REPRESENTING THE, THEN OFFICE OF MENTAL RETARDATION AND DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES (OMRDD) AS ITS

DIRECTOR OF INTERGOVERNMENTAL AND LEGISLATIVE AFFAIRS. ITS PURPOSE WAS TO BRING TO BEAR THE STAFF AND FISCAL RESOURCES WITHIN EACH OF THE DMH OFFICES TO ADDRESS IDENTIFIED CROSS SYSTEM ISSUES OF CONCERN. IN ORDER TO FACILITATE INTER-AGENCY COLLABORATION, THE DOH, STATE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT (SED), OFFICE OF CHILDREN AND FAMILY SERVICES (OCFS) AND THE DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES PLANNING COUNCIL (DDPC) WERE INVITED TO PARTICIPATE IN IOCC MEETINGS AS AD HOC MEMBERS.

THE MOST INTEGRATED SETTING COORDINATING COUNCIL (MISCC) WAS ESTABLISHED BY STATUTE IN 2002 TO HELP ENSURE THAT PERSONS OF ALL AGES WITH DISABILITIES RECEIVE SERVICES AND SUPPORTS IN THE MOST INTEGRATED SETTING APPROPRIATE TO THEIR NEEDS AND ENABLES THEM TO INTERACT WITH THEIR FAMILIES, FRIENDS, PEERS AND COLLEAGUES. THE MISCC IS COMPOSED OF TEN STATE AGENCIES AND NINE APPOINTED CONSUMER REPRESENTATIVES. I HAD THE PRIVILEGE OF SERVING AS STAFF OF THE MISCC IN 2007 AND 2008.

IN THAT CAPACITY, AS A RESULT OF FEEDBACK FROM ADVOCATES, I FACILITATED THE FORMATION OF THREE MISCC WORKGROUPS, EACH CHAIRED BY A MISCC MEMBER AGENCY RESPONSIBLE FOR HOUSING, TRANSPORTATION AND EMPLOYMENT. THE CONSENSUS AT THE TIME WAS THAT PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES NEEDED ACCESS TO HOUSING, EMPLOYMENT AND TRANSPORTATION TO BE EFFECTIVELY INTEGRATED INTO THE BROADER COMMUNITY. UNFORTUNATELY, MEMBER AGENCIES WERE RETICENT REGARDING SHARING FISCAL AND PROGRAMMATIC INFORMATION WHICH WOULD BETTER ENABLE THE MISCC TO IDENTIFY WHAT RESOURCES WERE AVAILABLE IN EACH OF THE MEMBER AGENCIES WHICH COULD BE USED MORE EFFECTIVELY AND EFFICIENTLY IN COLLABORATION TO SERVE THE NEEDS OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES.

IN THE FALL OF 2008, I WAS ASKED TO ASSUME THE POSITION OF DIRECTOR OF THE BROOME DDSO IN THE OPWDD. I WAS FULLY AWARE, GIVEN PRIOR OPERATIONAL ASSESSMENTS I COMPLETED THERE AND ELSEWHERE WITHIN THE AGENCY, AS WELL AS A WHISTLEBLOWER REPORT PROVIDED ME BY AN EMPLOYEE OF THE BROOME DDSO IN MY CAPACITY AS DIRECTOR OF INTERGOVERNMENTAL AND LEGISLATIVE AFFAIRS, THAT THERE WERE INCIDENTS OF ABUSE AND INVESTIGATIONS OF ALLEGED ABUSE THAT WERE BEING UNDER REPORTED AND INAPPROPRIATELY MODIFIED. IN SHORT, I WAS ASKED TO ASSUME THE

POSITION OF BROOME DDSO DIRECTOR TO TURN THINGS AROUND. HOWEVER, GIVEN THE SYSTEM AND ALL OF ITS INADEQUACIES AT THE STATE LEVEL, WHILE I WAS ABLE TO INTERNALLY CHANGE THE ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE TO A POSITIVE ATMOSPHERE, I OFTEN COULD NOT TERMINATE CERTAIN PERSONNEL, WHO WERE INDEED ABUSIVE, DUE TO THE UNWILLINGNESS OF CENTRAL OFFICE HUMAN RESOURCE PERSONNEL TO PURSUE THESE MATTERS AGGRESSIVELY.

ACROSS THE BOARD SPENDING CUTS AND HIRING FREEZES CAN HAVE UNINTENDED CONSEQUENCES. DUE TO THE FISCAL CONSTRAINTS FACING THE STATE DURING THE 2009-10 FISCAL YEAR, A SPENDING PLAN WAS IMPOSED ON THE BROOME DDSO WHICH SEVERELY REDUCED STAFFING AT THE BROOME DEVELOPMENTAL CENTER (BDC) AND DID NOT TAKE INTO ACCOUNT THE LEVELS OF DISABILITY OF INDIVIDUALS THEN LIVING AT THE BDC. OUR APPEALS FELL ON DEAF EARS. THESE SPENDING PLAN REDUCTIONS AND NOT BEING ALLOWED TO FILL CRITICAL HEALTH AND SAFETY FUNCTIONS CAUSED THE BROOME DDSO TO INCUR SIGNIFICANT OVERTIME COSTS TO MEET STAFFING MINIMUMS AND ENSURE THE SAFETY OF THE INDIVIDUALS LIVING AT THE BDC AND IN THE COMMUNITY. THE RESULT WAS THAT THE BDC WAS PLACED ON INTERMEDIATE SANCTIONS BY THE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH. I TOOK THE IMPOSITION OF INTERMEDIATE SANCTIONS BY DOH AND USED IT AS AN OPPORTUNITY TO ASSERTIVELY CHANGE THE CULTURE AT BDC. IN FEBRUARY, 2011 DOH LIFTED THE SANCTIONS. UNDER MY LEADERSHIP, THE BROOME DDSO WENT FROM A NON-CONFORMING ORGANIZATION THAT DISCOURAGED THE REPORTING OF INCIDENTS AND HAD LOW EMPLOYEE SATISFACTION, TO A FUNCTIONAL, FIELD FORWARD ORGANIZATION THAT IS TRANSPARENT, COMPLIANT, AND EMPLOYEE AND CONSUMER FOCUSED.

CONSOLIDATIONS AND MERGERS CAN ALSO HAVE UNINTENDED NEGATIVE IMPACTS. THE FY 2009-10 EXECUTIVE BUDGET ALSO MERGED THE VALLEY RIDGE DDSO WITH THE BROOME DDSO. VALLEY RIDGE STAFF ACTIVELY AND PASSIVELY RESISTED THE MERGER. WE BECAME AWARE OF THE EXISTENCE OF A 'COWBOY' CULTURE AT VALLEY RIDGE DURING OUR ASSESSMENT OF ITS OPERATIONS. CERTAIN VALLEY RIDGE STAFF WERE ALLEGEDLY PHYSICALLY ABUSING INDIVIDUALS LIVING THERE AND THREATENING STAFF WITH PHYSICAL HARM IF THEY REPORTED THESE INCIDENTS. I ATTEMPTED TO REPLACE THE FACILITY'S ADMINISTRATOR AND IMPLEMENT A CHANGE IN THE CULTURE THERE

BUT WAS HINDERED BY CENTRAL OFFICE. IN SHORT, CENTRAL OFFICE WITHIN OPWDD DETERMINED IT KNEW MORE ABOUT WHAT WAS HAPPENING AT VALLEY RIDGE THAN THE LOCAL ADMINISTRATION RESPONSIBLE FOR ITS ADMINISTRATIVE OVERSIGHT PURSUANT TO THE MENTAL HYGIENE LAW.

IN AUGUST, 2010 WE BECAME AWARE OF THE EXISTENCE OF AN AUDIO TAPE PURPORTED TO HAVE BEEN A RECORDING OF A VALLEY RIDGE STAFF MEMBER BRAGGING ABOUT PHYSICALLY ABUSING AN INDIVIDUAL LIVING THERE IN GRAPHIC DETAIL. WE IMMEDIATELY NOTIFIED THE STATE POLICE, INSPECTOR GENERAL AND OPWDD CENTRAL OFFICE REGARDING THIS MATTER. MUCH TO MY DISMAY, NONE OF THESE ENTITIES WOULD AGREE TO PURSUE THIS MATTER AT THAT TIME. IN THE CASE OF OPWDD, WE WERE INFORMED BY THE CENTRAL OFFICE PERSONNEL OFFICE RESPONSIBLE FOR REVIEWING INVESTIGATIONS AND PROPOSED DISCIPLINARY ACTIONS THAT MORE THAN A YEAR HAD TRANSPIRED SINCE THE TAPE WAS RECORDED AND THAT THE AGENCY COULD NOT TAKE THE MATTER ON. IT WAS NOT UNTIL GOVERNOR CUOMO TOOK OFFICE AND THE NEW YORK TIMES BEGAN REPORTING ON CONDITIONS WITHIN THE OPWDD SERVICE NETWORK THAT THE IG AND CQCAPD CONDUCTED THEIR OWN INVESTIGATIONS.

MY EXPERIENCES IN AND WITH THE MENTAL HYGIENE SERVICE DELIVERY SYSTEM PROVIDE A CAUTIONARY STORY WHICH I HOPE WILL HELP GUIDE THE LEGISLATURE AND THE EXECUTIVE MOVING FORWARD. THANK YOU FOR THE OPPORTUNITY TO PRESENT MY COMMENTS. I WOULD BE HAPPY TO ANSWER ANY QUESTIONS.