

[Date]

The Honorable **[first and last name]**
New Jersey State **[Assembly or Senate]**
[Address]
[City, state, zip]

Dear **[Senator , Assemblyman or Assemblywoman last name]**

As New Jersey is facing an extraordinary economic crisis, I urge you to place a priority on the mental health needs of the state's most vulnerable citizens. Job losses, home foreclosures, bankruptcies and loss of health insurance have wreaked havoc with the lives and the mental health of New Jersey's citizens. As a result, the demand for mental health treatment and services is skyrocketing, both from individuals previously diagnosed with mental illnesses who are experiencing intensified symptoms, as well as many who are now requiring treatment for the first time.

At **[your organization]**, which **[include a brief description of services you provide]**, we have witnessed the impact of the economic crisis through **[describe either increased demand at screening or other programs or increased wait for outpatient or other services. Or you can include a specific story about a client who lost a job, home, etc.]**

I ask for the opportunity to meet with you to discuss the challenges non-profit community mental health providers, including **[name of your organization]**, face in trying to meet the mental health needs of your constituents in **[District #]**, as well as citizens throughout the state.

Just as government recognizes the importance of bolstering food banks and unemployment resources during this fiscal crisis, it must assure adequate resources to meet the mental health needs of vulnerable citizens. It would be unconscionable to reduce funding for any of these services for the state's most vulnerable citizens when they are most desperate.

I also look forward to demonstrating to you how funding provided to the community mental health system actually saves money by reducing hospitalizations, incarcerations, substance abuse, joblessness, disability and dysfunctional families.

We recognize that the Legislature and Governor face extraordinarily difficult decisions in balancing the budget and meeting the needs of the state's citizens. I am confident that the non-profit mental health community can help New Jersey address both of these goals by providing effective and economical services to these citizens, helping them to become productive members of the community.

I will contact you to arrange a convenient meeting time. If you have any questions in the interim, please do not hesitate to contact me at **[phone and e-mail information]**. Thank you for your time and support.

Sincerely,