

February 11, 2019

Governor Andrew M. Cuomo
Executive Chamber
State Capitol
Albany, NY 12224

Majority Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins
New York State Senate
Legislative Office Building - Room 907
Albany, New York 12247

Assembly Speaker Carl Heastie
New York State Assembly
Legislative Office Building - Room 932
Albany, New York 12248

Re: 2019 - 2020 Budget Funding for the State Education Department office of the Professions

Dear Governor Cuomo, Majority Leader Stewart-Cousins and Speaker Heastie:

We are submitting this letter today on behalf of twenty-six professions that are regulated by the New York State Education Department Office of the Professions (“OP”). As you are aware, OP is charged with the significant responsibility of overseeing 54 licensed professions in New York State. This oversight includes receiving, reviewing and processing more than 50,000 new license applications each year, renewing the registrations of 300,000 licensed professionals, providing practice guidance and advice to the 54 professions, registering 8,000 pharmacies, manufacturers, re-packers, wholesalers and outsourcing facilities annually, evaluating more than 3,000 annual filings for professional corporations, ensuring compliance with continuing education and other statutory requirements and conducting 7,000 investigations each year related to professional misconduct.

The work that OP does to regulate the professions is instrumental in ensuring the health, safety and welfare of the people of New York State that rely on the services of professionals licensed in health, business and design services. Without the important work undertaken by OP, New Yorkers would not be assured of the services by qualified, licensed professions. As the professions who work closely with OP, we know firsthand that OP has been facing significant budget pressures for well over a decade. We have watched as the duties of OP have expanded while the funding for its responsibilities has not.

In fact, to help ensure that OP could do the important work we all rely on, many of the

professions on this letter supported a budget proposal in the 2009 - 2010 enacted budget that imposed a surcharge of 15% on all license/registration fees paid by our professions. The fee was to be used to increase staffing and modernize technology at OP. This was strongly supported by the professions because we know first-hand of the challenges faced by OP.

Despite our support of this surcharge, we understand that the funding from the surcharge on the license/registration fees has been withheld from OP, and recent budget allocations for OP are insufficient to cover the operations of the office. We have experienced the effects of this funding deficiency. The staffing shortages are even greater than in previous years, and the State Boards for the professions are not able to hold their meetings in person or provide timely guidance in critical practice areas. Specifically, we feel that the lack of in person meetings by the State Boards are detrimental to all the professions as it inhibits effective conversations and decision making on issues of importance to the professions. As OP has attempted to hold the State Board meetings remotely, it has highlighted not only the importance of having in person meetings but also the great strides that still need to be made in the technology used by OP.

It is our understanding that the 2019 - 2020 Executive budget proposal does include an increased appropriation for OP. We strongly support this increase. In addition to this increase, we also strongly support any proposal or budgetary change that would grant OP general spending authority to the full extent of the funds available from the 15% license/registration surcharge, so that they can finally realize the goals of increase staffing and modernizing technology.

In conclusion, the twenty-seven professional organizations listed below strongly support the increased budget allocations to OP and any effort to enhance access by OP to the revenue generated by increased professional license/registration fees.

Sincerely,

Acupuncture Society of New York
American Association for Marriage & Family Therapy - NY State
American Institute of Architects New York State
American Massage Therapy Association - NY Chapter
American Nurses Association - New York
National Association of Social Workers - New York State Chapter
National Association for the Advancement of Psychoanalysis
New York Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics
New York Chiropractic Council
New York Mental Health Counselors
New York Physical Therapy Association

New York State Association of Professional Land Surveyors
New York State Association of Licensed Midwives
New York State Association for Neuropsychology
New York State Association of Nurse Anesthetists
New York State Chiropractic Association
New York State Clinical Laboratory Association
New York State Occupational Therapy Association
New York State Optometric Association
New York State Podiatric Medical Association
New York State Psychological Association
New York State Society for Clinical Social Work
New York State Society of Professional Engineers
New York State Society for Respiratory Care
New York State Task Force on Occupational Regulation - Mid- Atlantic Region/American
Music Therapy Association
New York State Veterinary Medical Society
Nurse Practitioner Association New York State

cc: Assemblymember Helene Weinstein
Senator Liz Krueger
Assemblymember Deborah Glick
Senator Toby Ann Stavisky
Assemblymember Richard Gottfried
Senator Gustavo Rivera
Robert Mujica
Blake Washington
Todd Scheuermann
Ginnie Farrell
Jan Dorman