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Community care associations seek funds from health care investment account

A group of 21 community health care associations gathered at the state Capitol Tuesday afternoon to urge lawmakers to set aside funds from the state's Healthcare Transformation Fund for community-based providers.

Specifically, they urged the passage of legislation currently in committee in the Assembly and state Senate that calls for at least 25% of the money deposited in the fund—created as part of the state's fiscal 2019 budget—to be allocated for such a purpose.

In a letter delivered to state lawmakers Tuesday, Lauri Cole, executive director of the New York State Council for Community Behavioral Healthcare, noted on behalf of the associations that \$675 million from the fund was made available earlier this year to provide a Medicaid rate increase for hospitals and nursing homes across the state.

"We recognize the needs of our colleagues who work in hospitals and nursing homes, and we do not begrudge them these increases," she wrote. "However, without a stable community-based system of care, New York state will not be able to achieve its policy objectives to include decreased readmission rates, diversion from emergency rooms and other acute-care services to less costly alternatives, and ensure access to care is available to all New Yorkers when they need it."

The associations further said that community-based providers in the state have been deprived of funding for more than two decades. The first phase of the Statewide Healthcare Facility Transformation in 2017 allocated only 6.5% of the \$475.9 million available to community-based providers. And transformation funding through the Delivery System Reform Incentive Payment and other programs from 2015 to 2020 allocated a mere 0.7% of the more than \$8 billion available to community-based providers, they added.

"Community-based providers are operating on a wafer-thin financial base at the same time that they are depended upon to decrease hospital readmission rates, divert nonacute patients from the ER and increase access to care for children and adults in communities reeling from the impact of two simultaneous public health crises: the opioid epidemic and rising suicide rates," Cole said in a statement. —J.H.