

New York Health Care

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NEWSLETTER

STATE

Human services workers push for higher COLA

BY: KATELYN CORDERO, MAYA KAUFMAN | 03/06/2026 05:45 AM EST

DRIVING THE DAY

Behavioral health advocates are pushing for a higher cost-of-living adjustment for health and human service workers in one-house proposals set to be introduced next week.

Sherry Tucker, CEO of WellLife Network, a non-profit health and human services organization that works with the state's Medicaid program, said she is hoping to see the Legislature push for an inflationary increase much higher than 2.7 percent, with the knowledge that it will land somewhere in the middle during three-way budget negotiations.

Gov. Kathy Hochul included a 1.8 percent increase in her executive budget proposal, but advocates say anything lower than 2.7 percent will leave workers without a suitable wage to make ends meet.

Tucker noted that with minimum wage increases, it makes it difficult to retain workers when they can get a similar wage for a much easier job elsewhere.

She said workers need proper wages so organizations like hers can recruit staff to handle an expected influx of New Yorkers seeking assistance due to federal funding cuts to public health insurance coverage and SNAP benefits.

“It’s very disheartening to know that such a vital component of our support system in the healthcare arena is being short changed, by the governor,” Tucker told POLITICO. “While the 2.7 percent would be a big improvement, it’s really not enough in and of itself.”

IN OTHER NEWS:

— **The Mount Sinai Health System and 32BJ Health Fund** inked a direct contract to preserve in-network coverage for more than 100,000 building service workers enrolled in the union’s benefits fund, which would have otherwise ended due to a breakup between Mount Sinai and Anthem Blue Cross Blue Shield.

“When hospitals and insurance companies can’t come to agreement, hardworking people lose,” Cora Opsahl, the 32BJ Health Fund director, said in a statement. “We are pleased that we were able to go directly to Mount Sinai to successfully negotiate for ongoing access for our members to high quality affordable care through the Mount Sinai Hospital System.”

GOT TIPS? Send story ideas and feedback to Maya Kaufman at mkaufman@politico.com and Katelyn Cordero at kcordero@politico.com.

ODDS AND ENDS

NOW WE KNOW — Planned Parenthood is [rolling out unconventional services, like Botox](#), to diversify its revenue stream.

TODAY’S TIP — How to [avoid injuries as you age](#).

STUDY THIS — Children with developmental delays or disabilities who received early intervention services before the age of 3 had [higher test scores in the third grade](#), according to a new study by Columbia University researchers with the New York City Department of Health.

WHAT WE’RE READING

— **Columbia is under investigation** for its handling of sex-abuse claims against former gynecologist Robert Hadden. ([New York Times](#))

— **A new poll shows** who Americans trust over the CDC. ([Washington Post](#))

— **Six federal scientists** run out by Trump talk about the work left undone. ([KFF Health News via CNN](#))

AROUND POLITICO

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AUTHORS



Katelyn Cordero
kcordero@politico.com | @katelyncordero



Maya Kaufman
mkaufman@politico.com | @mayakauf



YOUR ACCOUNT MANAGEMENT TEAM

Ruth Yemene

Customer Engagement Specialist
ryemene@politico.com

Caitlin O Hare

Associate Account Manager, Pro
cohare@politico.com