



For Immediate Release

Contact: [Leanne Ricchiuti](#), Association for Community Living, 518.222.8073

November 6, 2025

RELEASE

Association for Community Living Announces Inaugural Excellence in Direct Care Awards

Senator Samra G. Brouk Honored with 2025 ACLAIMH Leadership Award

*Highlight of Annual Conference Recognizes Excellence in Direct Care Awards
Recipients among Mental Health Housing Communities Across New York*

(Bolton Landing, N.Y.) – The [Association for Community Living](#) (ACL), honored Senator Brouk with this year's Leadership Award, and presented its first-ever Excellence in Direct Care Awards at the organization's [46th Annual ACLAIMH Conference](#), held at the Sagamore Hotel, last week. These awards honor the essential contributions of employees in New York's mental health housing and community system—individuals who dedicate their lives to supporting recovery, independence, and dignity for one of the state's most vulnerable populations.

The Association for Community Living proudly recognized Senator Samra G. Brouk, Chair of the Senate Committee on Mental Health, with the **2025 ACLAIMH Leadership Award** for her steadfast advocacy and leadership on behalf of New York's behavioral health community.

Representing the 55th Senate District, Senator Brouk has been a tireless champion for equity, dignity, and access to care. Through her strong advocacy and partnership with state leaders, she played a key role in helping to secure the first Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) in more than a decade, and advancing critical legislation, such as Daniel's Law. Her work continues to strengthen the direct care workforce and expand support for individuals and families across the state. Her vision for a more compassionate, community-based mental health system reflects the spirit of this award and the values shared by ACLAIMH and its members.

A video message from the Senator is [viewable here](#).

ACL member employees provide around-the-clock support in residential and community-based programs, often doing more with less. Their days are filled with acts of quiet heroism by helping tenants manage serious health conditions, providing comfort and dignity at the end of life, ensuring safety in times of crisis, mentoring new staff, and creating

homes that are welcoming and stable. From organizing food pantry trips to moving into residences during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic to ensure no one was left alone, these professionals show up every day with empathy, resilience, and resolve.

A total of 34 award recipients were announced during the ACL conference at the Sagamore Hotel, representing agencies from every corner of the state. [A full list of honorees is viewable here.](#)

“The direct care workforce is the backbone of New York’s mental health housing system,” said Dr. Ann Sullivan, Commissioner of the New York State Office of Mental Health. “Their compassion, skill, and persistence make recovery and independence possible for thousands of individuals across our state. These awards shine a much-deserved spotlight on their incredible dedication.” The Commissioner [sent a letter](#) to Direct Care workers expressing her gratitude.

Senator Brouk praised the honorees, “These workers embody the very best of care—meeting people where they are and walking alongside them in their recovery journey. Their quiet, consistent work is often unseen, but it is absolutely vital to building strong, healthy communities.”

Assemblymember Jo Anne Simon, Chair of the Assembly Committee on Mental Health, added, “Direct care workers face extraordinary challenges daily with patience, creativity, and compassion, playing a vital role in New York’s mental health housing system. Their excellence deserves recognition. These awards affirm the dignity of their profession and those they serve,” said Assemblymember Jo Anne Simon, Chair of the Assembly Committee on Mental Health.”

According to Emil Slane, Executive Director of the Association for Community Living, the creation of the ACL Excellence in Direct Care Award is long overdue. “Our members have long known that the success of New York’s mental health housing and community based system depends on the extraordinary commitment of direct care workforce. These individuals inspire us every day with their dedication to helping people not just survive, but thrive. We are proud to celebrate their contributions and to tell their stories.”

“Direct care workers are the heart and soul of our agencies,” said Liz Smith, ACL Board President. “Their commitment, creativity, and compassion transform housing into true homes, where recovery and dignity can flourish. As a board, we are honored to celebrate their essential work and to amplify the value they bring not only to our members, but to communities across New York State.”

ACL represents more than 110 community-based agencies across New York, that provide housing and rehabilitation and support services to nearly 50,000 individuals living with serious mental illness. The Excellence in Direct Care Awards highlight the heart of that work—the people on the frontlines.

For more information about ACL visit, <https://aclnys.org/>.

About Association for Community Living. The Association for Community Living (ACL) is a statewide membership organization of not-for-profit agencies that provide housing and rehabilitation services to nearly 50,000 New Yorkers who have been diagnosed with serious and persistent mental illness. Many of the people served in these programs have co-occurring physical health problems and substance use disorders. The day-to-day rehabilitative and support activities performed in community residential and other housing settings are vital for people who face the daily challenges of living with a mental illness and want to live independent, productive and satisfying lives as members of the community.