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ART CHANG, NYC MAYORAL CANDIDATE, IS CLEAR-EYED IN HIS PLANS TO REFORM THE CITY'S MENTAL HEALTH CARE SYSTEM, PUTTING PEOPLE FIRST

New York City, New York – Art Chang has released his policy for addressing the mental health crisis that is present in New York City. His new Mental Health policy is decisively to the point: “The top priority of my administration will be to address the causes of illness, especially poverty, to promote the presence of health, and to create a more responsive government that puts people first over bureaucracy.”

Almost one New Yorker out of every 25 lives with a serious mental illness; in fact, around 280,000 adults living in the City deal with major depressive disorder or schizophrenia. Additionally, people of color and those in poverty bear the greatest mental health burden but are the least likely to get help. Compounding issues surrounding mental health are the deleterious effects of homelessness and incarceration.

“Reforming the mental healthcare system may seem too challenging a dilemma to address and take on,” acknowledges Chang. “But it’s not. Paramount to the conversation is placing the focus on the individual and the struggles they experience because of their mental health, which often intersects with their physical health. All the rest comes after that.”

With regard to the “rest,” Chang is committed to a plan that:

- (1) focuses on the equitable delivery of social support systems and relief for long-term prevention, resilience, and well-being;
- (2) provides safety and immediate relief for people who are homeless;
- (3) expands supports in the public schools; and
- (4) implements data collection to set a baseline for performance measurement.

Explains Chang, “New York City’s current delivery of mental health care is antiquated. It presupposes that mental health (good) means the opposite of mental illness (bad).” He adds, “But it’s much more nuanced than that. Nearly everyone, at some point in their lives, exists in the middle, moving from good to bad and back again, depending upon what they may be experiencing. Their experiences can be formed by poverty, violence, cultural norms, gender and racial bias, the absence of open space and clean air, or situations simply outside their control, to just name a few.”

The Mental Health policy outlined by NYC Mayoral Candidate Art Chang puts people first. First and foremost, it establishes the role of Deputy Mayor for Well-Being, a dedicated position to oversee the Department of Health and Health & Hospitals and Department of Mental Health & Hygiene. Next, it prioritizes maternal depression screenings for young mothers, expands syringe exchange programs and ensures equitable distribution of Naloxone kits, adds 10,000 new beds in supportive housing, and increases access to outpatient mental health services.

You can read Art Chang’s full Mental Health policy here: <https://www.chang.nyc/mental-health>