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COMMUNITY REMEMBERS ANNIVERSARY OF TOPS SHOOTING

Gov. Kathy Hochul on Sunday announced nearly \$10 million in investments and grant awards as part of the state's ongoing efforts to address the needs of the east Buffalo community. The day marked the one-year anniversary of the racially motivated attack at a Tops Supermarket in Buffalo.

"One year after the devastating attack at Tops Supermarket, our commitment to east Buffalo remains steadfast," Hochul said. "As community members continue to grapple with the attack, we are incredibly grateful for SAMHSA's support to expand access to mental health services in the community. From support for the May 14th Memorial to additional funding for home repair assistance, we will continue to support east Buffalo however we can."

The nearly \$10 million announcement follows the \$50 million targeted investment Hochul announced in June 2022 to address the immediate needs of the community.

The new funding includes:
√ \$5 million to expand the Buffalo East Homeowner Improvement Program (BEHIP) above the initial \$34.5 million announced for homeowner investments. Hochul's team said, "The program will continue to assist qualifying homeowners in east Buffalo with emergency home repairs including code violations and major system repairs."

√ A \$4 million federal grant from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) to enhance access to mental health services in the east Buffalo community.

√ \$900,000 initial investment to support the siting and development of a permanent May 14th Memorial being planned by the May 14th Memorial Commission, which Hochul and Mayor Byron Brown announced in October 2022.

Hochul's team said, "This \$4 million SAMHSA grant comes from the Resiliency in Communities After Stress and Trauma (ReCAST) grant program, which assists high-risk youth and families and promotes resilience and equity with evidence-based, violence prevention, and community youth engagement programs. ReCAST also helps link individuals who have been traumatized by events in their lives and are



The Buffalo community remembered the Tops mass shooting at events over the weekend. (Photo by Darren McGee/Office of Gov. Kathy Hochul)

in need of treatment to trauma-informed behavioral health services.

"New York State's Office of Mental Health will utilize the ReCAST grant to support a coalition of diverse community stakeholders to develop programming that is recovery-oriented, trauma-informed, and equity-based behavioral health and wellness. The ReCAST grant will be directed by a needs assessment and plan driven by the community."

The grant will fund several programs:

√ A Black Mental Health Response Team led by BestSelf Behavioral Health will continue outreach and enhancement with youth and families in the east Side;

√ University Psychiatric Practice, in collaboration with SayYes Buffalo and the Buffalo Public Schools, will provide clinical supports for students struggling with community trauma and training for educators;

√ Buffalo community nontraditional mental wellness programs will continue a focus on respecting and integrating Black/African American traditions and culture to include arts-based therapies, coordination with local houses of worship and spiritual-based healing.

Hochul's team said, "Earlier this year, the Office of Mental Health received a \$2.35 million SAMHSA Emergency Response Grant, which is being distributed to local community organizations on Buffalo's east side that are providing an array of mental health resources to help residents impacted by the racially

motivated shooting that took the lives of ten individuals last year."

Office of Mental Health Commissioner Dr. Ann Sullivan said, "The pain and suffering caused by a tragic shooting lingers long after the traumatic event. The fear and feelings of hopelessness can be devastating. The work we are doing with our partners in the community is providing relief to residents, and this funding from SAMHSA will help us to provide more support to the people of Buffalo."

Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer said, "There are truly no words to describe the horrific loss that the entire Buffalo community experienced one year ago, when 10 of their own were senselessly murdered solely because of the color of their skin. But faced with this tragedy, the east side community has bounced back with defiance and leadership, and we've been working to deliver millions directly to the east side, from fighting food insecurity, to training workers for good-paying manufacturing careers. But our work has only just begun – Buffalo's east side is in need of robust investment to heal and build for the future. This nearly \$10 million in funding will ensure that the eastside community has access to enhanced mental health services, a top-notch homeowner improvement program, and a memorial that creates a lasting reminder of the losses we experienced one year ago. Together, we've worked to meet this tragic event with incred-

ible resilience, and I will stand with Governor Hochul, our community leaders, and the brave families every step of the way to build a safer and more equitable Buffalo for all."

Congressman Brian Higgins said, "One year ago everything changed. Our community was targeted and our neighbors and friends were killed. The focus continues on rebuilding east Buffalo and healing the deep emotional wounds."

New York State Sen. Tim Kennedy said, "One year after the mass shooting on Jefferson, our grief is still just as overwhelming. Although the path towards healing looks different for everyone, we continue to lift each other up, including through targeted investment and outreach that directly supports communities of color and the east side of Buffalo as a whole. As we remember the 10 lives stolen on that day, we promise to create a better and more inclusive future in their memory, and this announcement builds on that commitment."

Majority Leader Crystal Peoples-Stokes said, "Mother's Day carries a heavier weight this year as many families remember and honor their matriarch and loved ones that were senselessly lost to racism one year ago. We continue to love and support the victims' families, area residents, and survivors as they seek solace. Unfortunately, it took tragedy for many to acknowledge and act against existing disparities that have become a way of life for my people. Gov. Hochul and her administration have been a critical partner of joining the eastside of Buffalo's collective advocacy efforts for equity – understanding that it will take exponentially more investment to undo decades of redlining, disinvestment, and decay that has already occurred."

Brown said, "As we continue to reflect on the anniversary of the racially motivated mass shooting that shook our community, we must ensure that resources are used intentionally to improve the lives of Black residents and overcome the historic inequities in east Buffalo. These key investments in home repairs, as well as access to mental health services, are vital to achieving economic mobility for Black residents."

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