



New York State Joint Budget Hearing on 2024 Executive Budget Proposal: Mental Hygiene

Tuesday, February 13th, 2024
Hearing Room B, Legislative Office Building 2nd Floor,
181 State Street, Albany, New York, 12210

Testimony Delivered by:

Shameka Andrews, Community Outreach Coordinator
Self-Advocacy Association of NYS

Marilyn Stata, President
Self-Advocacy Association of NYS

First, we want to thank you for the opportunity to speak to this committee today. We would also like to thank this committee, NYS and OPWDD for their commitment to creating and supporting person-centered services for New York's citizens with developmental and other disabilities.

The Self-Advocacy Association of New York State, Inc. (SANYS), is an organization founded, and led, by people with developmental disabilities for people with developmental disabilities. Our goal is to help self-advocates build the skill and courage needed to speak up for themselves and others.

What self-advocates across New York State have told us this year is that the staff supports we depend on to live are in crisis because Direct Support Professionals and Home Care Staff are not getting paid enough.

When people cannot get the care they need in the community, they may be forced to move back into hospitals, nursing homes, or other institutional settings that cost the state more money.

Until this problem is fixed NYS is going backwards not forward.

The Governor has proposed a 1.5% increase in the COLA, but we believe this is not enough to help people. We need a 3.2% increase this year and the \$4,000 wage enhancement to keep the staff that we depend on.

We also need increased pay for home care staff in the Consumer Directed Personal Assistance Program.

We oppose cuts to pay for CDPA staff in the Governor's budget proposal and we support the Fair Pay for Home Care bill that would raise wages for home care staff to 150% of the minimum wage.

Many people living in their own homes are struggling to have their basic needs met. Many suffer discomfort, pain, and the indignity of not having their personal needs met in a timely way on a regular basis. They often choose to suffer through this rather than return to institutional settings or to a home that is not their own.

Setting higher wages would encourage staff to continue working in this field and would save money for New York State by keeping people out of expensive institutional settings.

We are also worried about changes to CDPA Eligibility that would make it hard for people with developmental disabilities to qualify for this program. Passing bills S328 and A6346 would repeal these changes and allow people with I/DD to continue being supported in the community.

We support changes to the Nurse Practice Act to make it easier for support staff in community settings to give us the medications we need. We should not be forced into a more restrictive

home just because we need help with our medications. Passing bill A7740 would allow nurses to decide if a person or their family can train staff to give medications in community settings.

We are worried that smaller businesses which provide Durable Medical Equipment will go out of business because of higher costs and lower payments they get from Managed Care. We urge you to pass bills S3468/A3408 to make payments to DME providers fairer.

When you look at the budget this year, please remember that people with developmental disabilities in New York are in crisis, and we deserve support for our staff who support us.

We are confident that this committee, NYS and OPWDD will continue to work with New York's self-advocates, and other stakeholders, to ensure that New York continues to be an example of innovation and quality of services for its citizens with Developmental Disabilities. We thank you for your time.

The above statements represent views of the board of directors and members of the Self-Advocacy Association of NY State. For more information, or to schedule a meeting or visit, please contact: Arnold Ackerley, Administrative Director at aackerley@sanys.org or Shameka Andrews at sandrews@sanys.org. Phone: 518 382-1454.