



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Patricia Fahy

## Senator Fahy, Assemblymember Santabarbara, and New York Disability Advocates Urge New York to Stabilize Care System

PATRICIA FAHY February 26, 2025

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**ALBANY, NY** – Senator Fahy, Assemblymember Santabarbara, and New York Disability Advocates (NYDA) called for stronger investment and support in New Yorkers with disabilities today. Together, they advocated for New York to address the decades-long underfunding that has placed significant pressure on non-profit providers, making it difficult for them to overcome the workforce crisis and deliver the high-quality care that

people with disabilities deserve.

Today, over 300 members of New York Disability Advocates coalition, including representatives from New York's non-profit provider agencies, direct support professionals, family members, and people with disabilities, were joined by New York legislators at a rally in the War Room of the Capitol. Attendees advocated for a 7.8% targeted inflationary increase, a Human Services Wage Commission, and the return of rate-setting authority to the Office for People with Developmental Disabilities (OPWDD).

"As new Chair of the Senate Disabilities Committee, I'm looking forward to ensuring that New Yorkers living with disabilities and their families receive the support, services, and opportunities they need to thrive," said Senator Fahy (D—Albany), Chair of the Senate Disabilities Committee. "New York must invest in a meaningful 7.8% increase for system investment, a Human Services Wage Commission, and in expanding opportunities for employment by increasing the Workers with Disabilities Tax Credit—both critical steps in addressing workforce shortages, prioritizing jobs for workers with disabilities, and improving the quality of care for the New Yorkers who depend on these critical services. As negotiations surrounding the final FY2025-26 state budget progress, I look forward to working with our large coalition of advocates, my Assembly counterpart, Angelo Santabarbara, and legislative colleagues to craft a budget reflective of the needs of New Yorkers living with disabilities and their families."

"As a father of a son with autism and Chair of the New York State Assembly's Committee on People with Disabilities, I understand firsthand the vital role that direct support professionals and non-profit providers play in ensuring individuals with disabilities can lead meaningful and fulfilling lives," said Assemblymember Angelo Santabarbara. "This is not just a funding issue—it's about dignity, opportunity, and respect. We must take bold action to stabilize the direct care system, invest in our workforce, and ensure every New Yorker with a

disability has access to the support they need to thrive. Our state's commitment to inclusivity and equality depends on it."

"New York Disability Advocates are leading the charge in ensuring that individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities have the resources, support, and opportunities they deserve," said State Senator Lea Webb. "Investing in their future means investing in a more inclusive, equitable, and compassionate New York. It also means recognizing and uplifting the dedicated professionals who provide essential care and services every day. We must continue to advocate for policies and funding that empower individuals with disabilities and our hardworking care providers."

"Developmentally disabled New Yorkers deserve investment in the systems and people that support them through adequate staffing levels and stability for patients and workers alike," said State Senator Gustavo Rivera. "This budget season, I will work with my colleagues to find ways to increase funding for Direct Support Professionals' (DSP) salaries in order to recruit and retain staff. Further, we must increase Medicaid reimbursement rates so that they reflect the significant cost increases that providers across the board including within the IDD community have had to incur over the past several years. With threats of federal funding cuts over us, we must do everything in our power to protect our State's healthcare system especially for our most vulnerable populations."

"Every New Yorker deserves the opportunity to live with dignity. Regardless of ability, we must do all we can to make this possible by ensuring the necessary support. Real progress depends on the resources and policies needed to sustain quality care and a stable system, and today, we reaffirm our dedication to strengthening these efforts and getting this right," said Senator Monica Martinez.

"New Yorkers with disabilities deserve a care system that is strong, sustainable, and properly funded," said Mike Alvaro, president of New York Disability Advocates. "The New York State Legislature must take action to provide the necessary resources for non-profit providers, ensuring they can continue delivering the essential supports and services that individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities rely on."

In the FY 2026 One-House Budget Resolutions, non-profit provider agencies are calling for:

A 7.8% Targeted Inflationary Increase – Provider rates are all-inclusive and cover every aspect of care. This rate increase is crucial for provider agencies to keep pace with the rising costs of providing quality care to people with disabilities and ensure stability throughout the system.

Convene a Human Services Wage Commission – A wage commission would examine the roles and responsibilities of human service workers and create a long-term solution to address the staffing challenges of non-profit providers and ensure fair compensation for direct support professionals.

Reform Rate-Setting – Currently, rate-setting authority is with the Department of Health, which has resulted in a slow, unpredictable process and caused significant financial pressures for non-profit providers. Restoring this authority to OPWDD would streamline the process and help non-profit providers maintain high-quality care without financial uncertainty.

Senator Fahy and Assemblymember Santabarbara urge their colleagues in the Legislature to stand with them in prioritizing disability services in the upcoming one-house budget resolutions. By working together, lawmakers can take meaningful steps to address workforce challenges, support providers, and ensure that over 130,000 New Yorkers with disabilities are supported by a stable care system. Increased investment is essential to strengthening New York's disability services and providing both individuals with disabilities

and the professionals who support them with the necessary resources to succeed.

Together, these investments recognize the importance of investing in the workforce that serves New Yorkers living with disabilities, expanding employment opportunities for workers living with disabilities, and providing critical support for students living with disabilities. Senator Fahy replaces former Disabilities Committee Chair Senator John Mannion, who left the state Senate to join Congress. She has previously been recognized for her advocacy on behalf of individuals with developmental disabilities, receiving the New York State Industries for the Disabled (NYSID) Legislative Champion Award in 2019.

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