



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Joseph A. Griffo

## Griffo helps secure deal to raise pay for Direct Care Workers

JOSEPH A. GRIFFO March 30, 2017

| ISSUE: **DIRECT SERVICE PROFESSIONALS, DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES, FAIR WAGES**



State Senator Joseph A. Griffo of Rome and Assemblyman Anthony Brindisi of Utica say an agreement reached this week between the Assembly, Senate, and the Governor achieves a goal they have been working towards for several years: better wages for the Direct Support Professionals who work with those with developmental disabilities, mobility limitations, and other major medical needs.

**State Senator Joseph Griffo said:** "Our direct care workers are among the most compassionate individuals in any community, and the lives of our most vulnerable and disabled citizens are

enhanced every day by the dedication of these hard-working professionals. But for too long these workers have not received the adequate pay they deserve, and so I am glad that the Senate, Assembly and Governor have all agreed that we can no longer wait to properly compensate our direct care professionals for the important work they do. By approving a budget that will raise the wages for these workers, we can further strengthen the level of care that our communities provide for the developmentally disabled and their families."

**Assemblyman Anthony Brindisi said:** "For several years, I've been holding meetings with the parents of people with developmental disabilities, and one of their major concerns is always the need for experienced caregivers for their loved ones. When there is rapid turnover of direct care workers, it obviously hurts the individualized attention disabled clients receive. If this funding is approved as part of this year's budget, these valuable employees will see a 6.5 percent pay increase over the next two years, which will help with the retention of quality employees."

The two legislators say in 2015, a survey of nonprofit agencies by the Office for People with Developmental Disabilities showed that nearly one in four Direct Support Professionals who began working at the agencies did not return to work there for a second year, and vacancy rates exceeded 9 percent. The survey also showed that the remaining agency workers were paid for 6,442,594 hours of overtime—which represented a 13.5 percent increase from the previous year.

**Karen Korotzer, CEO of the Arc, Oneida-Lewis Chapter, NYSARC, Inc. said:** "Every minute of every day, direct support professionals work to ensure the highest level of quality care and support is provided to those with developmental disabilities. Their dedication, compassion, and loyalty to those they care for is heard in the stories they share and how the relationships they have developed with people with disabilities is paramount to what they do, and their willingness to go above and beyond for those they support. We are extremely grateful to

Assemblyman Brindisi and Senator Griffo for their unwavering support for a living wage on behalf of our Direct Support Professionals and the people with developmental disabilities and their families in our community. Our sincere thanks also to Governor Cuomo for his strong commitment to this effort.”

**Louis Tehan, President and CEO of Upstate Cerebral Palsy said:** “Our Direct Support Professionals are the backbone of what we do each day at the agency – providing one on one support, friendship and care to the hundreds of children and adults that come through our doors each year. It is their drive to help people live dignified, independent and full lives that make this job such a crucial one. We have lobbied for quite some time now for increased rates of pay for these staff and for the state budget to substantiate these increases. Thank you to Senator Joseph Griffo, Assemblyman Anthony Brindisi and to Governor Cuomo for continually fighting by our side on behalf of our Direct Support Professionals and for the children and adults that we are so privileged to support. Our direct care staff deserves better for their life-changing work and dedication, and we are pleased that this is finally becoming a reality.”

Griffo and Brindisi have participated in awareness campaigns conducted by non-profit agencies that employ Direct Care Workers, including the Direct Care Coalition’s ‘300 Days to Better Pay’ campaign last year, as well as making the issue a priority for the upcoming budget negotiations.

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