



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Robert G. Ortt

## Ortt Introduces Direct Care Worker Legislation

ROBERT G. ORTT April 18, 2018

| ISSUE: [BFAIR2DIRECTCARE](#), [MENTAL HEALTH](#)

Today, **Senator Rob Ortt (R,C,I,Ref-North Tonawanda)** introduced [legislation](#) aimed at addressing the salaries and benefits of direct care workers employed by mental hygiene not-for-profits operating under the state. Due to the lack of competitive wages, these not-for-profits are facing a massive shortage in the field of direct support professionals. In New York, one in seven direct support professional jobs remain vacant and staffing turnover rates rose to 27 percent.

“Direct support professionals are tasked with the exceedingly difficult job of looking after some of the most vulnerable members of our communities,” said Sen. Ortt. “Not only are these workers forced to work long hours, often logging massive amounts of overtime, but they are continually underpaid for the vital services they provide. My legislation would ensure that the direct support professionals of our state are paid the fair and living wage they not only deserve, but were promised.

In 2017, New York’s direct service providers logged over 10 million hours in overtime while earning less than the minimum wage of fast-food workers in the state.

While over the last two years, these support workers have received a 3.25 percent raise in pay, there is no legislation in place to continue the states pledge to fairly compensating these

professionals for their valuable work. Sen. Ortt's legislation would continue the state's commitment by providing a 3.25 percent increase to salaries and benefits for direct care workers for an additional four years.

"It's about having our priorities straight," said Sen. Ortt. "There is no reason that an individual working at a fast food restaurant should be making more than direct support professionals serving the not-for-profits do in our state. The levels of responsibility and contribution between the two professions are not even close to being comparable."

**Glenn Liebman, CEO, Mental Health Association in New York State, Inc. said,** "We commend Senator Ortt for his continued commitment to support the direct care and clinical workforce in the mental hygiene field through consistent increases in salaries over the next four years. These hard working individuals provide services and supports for many of the most vulnerable New Yorkers. We have an obligation to provide these workers with a living wage as recognition for the incredible work that they do on a daily basis."

**Tom McAlvanah, Executive Director, InterAgency Council of Developmental Disabilities Agencies, Inc. said,** "Hats off to Senator Ortt for his support of Direct Support Professionals! He realizes that DSP's who support people with Intellectual and developmental disabilities 24 hours a day, seven days a week deserve a living wage, and that without these talented and dedicated staff members, a good life would not be possible for the hundreds of thousands of New Yorkers who depend on them. We stand with Senator Ortt in his efforts to #bFair2DirectCare!"

**Susan Constantino, President & CEO of Cerebral Palsy Associations of New York State said,** "We are extremely pleased that Senator Ortt continues to be a leader in our efforts to work with the New York State Legislature and the Governor to raise the pay for our direct support professionals closer to a living wage. The Senate bill he has introduced will move us one step

closer to the goal of the #bFair2DirectCare campaign to address the workforce crisis in our field, said Susan Constantino, President & CEO of Cerebral Palsy Associations of New York State. We thank Senator Ortt for his leadership on this critical issue, and urge the other members of the Senate and Assembly to support legislation and #bFair2DirectCare.”

**Rhonda Frederick, President of the Developmental Disabilities Alliance of Western New York, President and CEO of People Inc. said,** “In many instances, Direct Support Professionals (DSP) act as lifeline between the individual with a developmental disability and their loved ones. They do so many things that an ageing parent or caregiver can no longer do. They manage behaviors, administer medicine, bath and assist with toileting and changing. The DSP is also there to help someone maximize their independence and to celebrate their accomplishments. They become like family. But seeing they don’t earn a living wage, they leave creating instability for the person with the disability and that lifeline suffers. That is why this wage increase is vital. Senator Ortt, and his never ending commitment to our workforce, people with developmental disabilities and their loved ones, is to be commended.”

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#### RELATED LEGISLATION

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### 2017-S8184

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- Introduced

- ○ In Committee Assembly
  - In Committee Senate
- ○ On Floor Calendar Assembly
  - On Floor Calendar Senate
- ○ Passed Assembly
  - Passed Senate
- Delivered to Governor
- Signed By Governor
- 

Relates to establishing a cost of living adjustment for designated human services programs

April 16, 2018

In Senate Committee [Rules](#)

Sponsored by [Robert G. Ort](#)

Do you support this bill?