



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

John W. Mannion

## Senator Mannion Announces New Jobs Program to Bolster Professional Workforce that Cares for Intellectually and Developmentally Disabled New Yorkers

JOHN W. MANNION May 7, 2021

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SYRACUSE, NY – Senator John W. Mannion (D-Geddes) today announced a new jobs program that will bolster the professional workforce that cares for Intellectually and Developmentally Disabled New Yorkers.

The new pilot program is a partnership between AccessCNY and Onondaga Community College. It is funded through a \$100,000 appropriation in the state budget secured by Senator Mannion. The state funding will support tuition credits, better salaries, mentoring, and paid internships to recruit and retain new individuals into the Direct Service Professionals (DSP.)

The ongoing effort to address the critical shortfall in the number of DSPs includes a long-overdue cost-of-living pay increase that Senator Mannion successfully fought for in the state budget.

“Working with the I/DD community is as rewarding as it is challenging, and we are seeking caring and compassionate New Yorkers to answer the call,” said Senator Mannion. “We are meeting the demand for more DSPs by increasing their pay and creating new career pathways. I applaud AccessCNY and Onondaga County Community College for piloting this

innovative partnership that will serve Central New York job-seekers and the I/DD New Yorkers who depend on reliable and loving care.”

“A crisis is coming to a head across the state and here in Central New York,” said AccessCNY Executive Director Paul Joslyn. “Individuals with disabilities rely on staff called Direct Support Professionals (DSPs) to succeed in our community. The work of DSPs is difficult, underappreciated and undervalued by too many. A lack of state funding has led DSP wages to fall behind over the last five years and caused an erosion of the workforce. Today, non-profit providers of services for those with disabilities are struggling with vacancy rates of twenty percent or more. DSPs cannot live off the wages offered and agencies can’t operate without DSPs. We applaud Senator Mannion’s effort to meet this crisis head on by helping restore a much needed Cost of Living Adjustment for DSPs and being open to new and innovative ideas to address this crisis.”

“At Onondaga Community College we like to tell people ‘community’ is our middle name. As Central New York’s partner in education for success, we are constantly in contact with our colleagues in the community, inquiring about ways in which we can assist them. AccessCNY needs trained, direct support professionals to serve growing needs in the community. We are committed to work with them on a solution which will be beneficial both for those who utilize AccessCNY’s services, and our students interested in a career which they can begin pursuing in the family of new programs we are developing in our health care and human services disciplines,” said OCC President Dr. Casey Crabill.

For AccessCNY and similar providers, recruiting and retaining staff is one of its biggest challenges. DSPs provide vital and intimate supports that help people with disabilities succeed at home and in the community. The new workforce development program will allow AccessCNY to invest in staff education in partnership with OCC, enhance pay, and create career pathways within the organization. The program will be available to AccessCNY staff

based on a competitive application process.

To improve the quality of care for people with disabilities, create a more stable and robust workforce, and develop a career ladder within AccessCNY, the program provides the following:

1. Tuition credits. Funding would allow AccessCNY to offer course credits for staff to attend OCC or other institutes of higher education. Staff would take classes that would enhance their overall education with specific curriculum aimed at careers in the human service field. The goal would be to obtain an Associates or Bachelor's degree to advance their career.
2. Enhanced pay: As staff complete credits their hourly wage would increase. This tiered system incentivizes learning and rewards them for their efforts. This enhanced pay would remain in effect so long as they remained an employee in good standing with AccessCNY.
3. Leadership Mentoring: Staff enrolled in this program would be assigned AccessCNY mentors. The first round of mentorship would be with an experienced DSP, with a subsequent placement with a Leadership level staff. Mentoring will deliver hands on experience, but also a continued dialogue on educational progress and career exploration within AccessCNY.
4. Paid Internships: Funding would also be used to support paid internships in partnership with OCC. These internships would be available to those pursuing human service degrees who are not currently employed by AccessCNY. The internships would allow students to learn about and explore various programs across the agency before narrowing their internships to one or two departments. The goal would be to make AccessCNY an attractive employer to the intern.

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