



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Daphne Jordan

## 2022-23 State Budget letter seeking funding for Direct Support Professionals

DAPHNE JORDAN February 10, 2022

| ISSUE: **HEALTH EQUITY, MENTAL HEALTH, DIRECT SUPPORT PROFESSIONALS**

February 10, 2022

The Honorable Kathy Hochul

Governor of New York State

NYS Capitol Building Albany, NY 12224

The Honorable Andrea Stewart-Cousins

President Pro Tempore and New York State Senate Majority Leader

Room 330, State Capitol Albany, NY 12247

Dear Governor Hochul and Majority Leader Stewart-Cousins:

For years, the not-for-profit community organizations that provide services to citizens of New York with Intellectual or Developmental Disabilities (I/DD) have been reporting that the funding New York State provides to them through the Medicaid rate is insufficient.

We believe it has become a crisis and that increasing the funding to these organizations that

have dedicated their existence to providing a safe, wholesome, and nurturing environment to the people and families they serve must be a state budgetary priority.

Several factors are causing this crisis:

- Insufficient funding for salaries has resulted in vacancy rates for Direct Support Professionals (DSPs) positions as high as 40%;
- Remaining staff are working tremendous amounts of overtime, management is filling in as caregivers, and living arrangements changes are being considered to increase the number of residents in any location to spread remaining staff as far as possible;
- Those receiving services are not as easily able to attend activities provided by the agencies, are less able to integrate into their communities, and are less likely to obtain and maintain employment because of the lack of staffing; and
- Many more people remain on waiting lists for services.

The salary of an entry-level DSP is \$29,000 at the ARC of Rensselaer County. Yet, the responsibilities of this essential position are much greater than the salary reflects. DSPs help people with disabilities with all their daily tasks such as bathing, dressing, meal planning, and preparation, taking medication, and engaging in meaningful activities. Yet, DSPs can make a higher salary at McDonald's or Amazon. They can also make \$10,000 more per year working for OPWDD doing the exact same job!

We believe that New York State has a responsibility to help end this crisis by increasing the Medicaid rate such that DSPs working for community providers can be paid a higher salary and those with disabilities who depend on the services DSPs provide, can receive the services

they deserve.

Thankfully, the 2022-23 Executive Budget includes a COLA for these agencies, which is a good start. However, we need to add funding so that the DSPs can see an increase in their wages of 20% on an ongoing basis. Additionally, we need to commit to an annual COLA that will provide for annual increases for this vital workforce. With the State Budget in the best shape it has been in years, NOW is the time to make up for the lack of investment in I/DD services that occurred over the last 11 years.

We respectfully request that these noted investments become a budgetary priority and that this funding be reflected in the final 2022-23 State Budget. Thank you for your consideration of our request advanced on behalf of our dedicated, hard-working Direct Support Professionals who deliver essential services.

Sincerely,

Daphne Jordan

State Senator, 43rd District

Robert Ortt

Minority Leader, 62nd District

Andrew Lanza

State Senator, 24th District

George Borrello

State Senator, 57th District

Peter Oberacker

State Senator, 51st District

Michael Martucci

State Senator, 42nd District

Patrick Gallivan

State Senator, 59th District

Patty Ritchie

State Senator, 48th District

Thomas O'Mara

State Senate, 58th District

Pamela Helming

State Senator, 54th District

Sue Serino

State Senator, 41st District

Dan Stec

State Senator, 45th District

James Tedisco

Senate Senator, 49th District

Edward Rath

State Senator, 61st District

Anthony Palumbo

State Senator, 1st District

Fred Akshar

State Senator, 52nd District