

CHAIRMAN
MENTAL HEALTH &
DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES

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CIVIL SERVICE AND PENSIONS
CORPORATIONS, AUTHORITIES
AND COMMISSIONS

ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION
HIGHER EDUCATION

LABOR

LOCAL GOVERNMENT

VETERANS HOMELAND SECURITY
AND MILITARY AFFAIRS

THE SENATE
STATE OF NEW YORK



ROBERT G. ORTT
SENATOR, 62ND DISTRICT

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DISTRICT OFFICE:
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FAX: (716) 434-3297

December 5, 2016

Hon. Andrew M. Cuomo
Governor
New York State
State Capitol
Albany, NY 12224

Dear Governor Cuomo:

We write to ask that, as part of your 2017-18 Executive Budget Proposal, you include \$45M to begin developing a living wage for direct support workers who provide services to people with disabilities.


The work associated with supporting people with disabilities is hardly minimum wage work. Direct support workers are highly skilled, must support people with any/all needs, and often must help manage challenging behaviors. Increasingly, people who provide direct supports are leaving this line of work as organizations that provide these services on behalf of NYS are no longer able to offer competitive compensation. These organizations would raise wages for direct support staff, however, 90% of their revenue comes from public dollars, more than 80% of which goes to worker compensation. Therefore, any increase in direct support staff wages means additional investments by NYS.


Due to lack of investments over a period of years, we now have a workforce crisis when it comes to direct support workers. Service provider organizations experienced a 20% increase in staff vacancy rates from 2014 to 2015, a rate that now stands at 10% on average, statewide. Likewise, service provider organizations experienced a 21% increase in direct support staff one-year turnover rates from 2014 to 2015, a rate that now stands at an astonishing and unsustainable 23% on average, statewide. Simply put, if NYS does not make major investments in the direct support workforce this year, we risk staffing shortages that will cause provider organizations to collapse, and individuals with disabilities and their families to go without the vital supports on which they depend.


In order to stem this crisis, we ask that you include \$45M in your 2017-18 Executive Budget Proposal, as the first year of a 6-year commitment, that will eventually create a living wage for direct support workers. A living wage, commensurate with the job requirements and responsibilities, is the least we must do if we expect NYS to remain a model of supports for people with disabilities.


Thank you for your consideration.

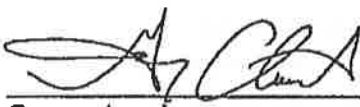
Sincerely,



Robert G. Ortt
Senator, 62nd District



John DeFrancisco
Senator, 50th District

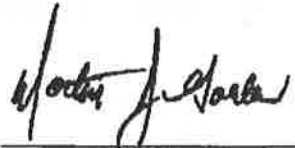

Fredrick Akshar
Senator, 52nd District



Rich Funke
Senator, 55th District

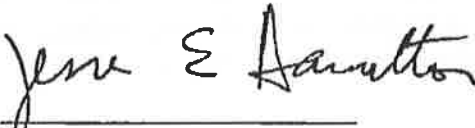

George Amedore
Senator, 46th District


Patrick Gallivan
Senator, 59th District


Tony Avella
Senator, 11th District


Martin Golden
Senator, 22nd District


Thomas Croci
Senator, 3rd District


Jesse Hamilton
Senator, 20th District

Kemp Hannon

Kemp Hannon
Senator, 6th District

Kathy Marchione

Kathleen Marchione
Senator, 43rd District

Pamela A. Helming

Pamela Helming
Senator, 54th District

Dr. Terrance P. Murphy

Terrance Murphy
Senator, 40th District

Todd K

Todd Kaminsky
Senator, 9th District

Michael H. Ranzenhofer

Michael Ranzenhofer
Senator, 61st District

Timothy M. Kennedy

Timothy Kennedy
Senator, 63rd District

Patricia Ritchie

Patricia Ritchie
Senator, 48th District

Bill Larkin

William Larkin
Senator, 39th District

Sue Serino

Susan Serino
Senator, 41st District

George Latimer

George Latimer
Senator, 37th District

David Valesky

David Valesky
Senator, 53rd District

Betsy Little

Elizabeth Little
Senator, 45th District

**NEW YORK
STATE
SENATE**



SENATOR CHRISTOPHER L. JACOBS
60TH SENATE DISTRICT

January 13, 2017

The Honorable Andrew M. Cuomo
Governor of New York State
NYS State Capitol Building
Albany, NY 12224

Dear Governor Cuomo,

I write to ask that, as part of your 2017-18 Executive Budget Proposal, you include \$45M to begin developing a living wage for direct support workers (DSP's) who provide services to people with disabilities. I have hundreds of DSP's that reside in my district. They provide a vital service to the individuals they serve and the entire State of New York. Of note, many of them and the providers they work for actively supported your efforts to raise the minimum wage.

The work associated with supporting people with disabilities is hardly minimum wage work. Direct support workers are highly skilled, must support people with any/all needs, and often must help manage challenging behaviors. Increasingly, people who provide direct supports are leaving this line of work as organizations that provide these services on behalf of NYS are no longer able to offer competitive compensation. These organizations would raise wages for direct support staff, however, 90% of their revenue comes from public dollars, more than 80% of which goes to worker compensation. Therefore, any increase in direct support staff wages means additional investments by NYS.

Due to lack of investments over a period of years, we now have a workforce crisis when it comes to direct support workers. Service provider organizations experienced a 20% increase in staff vacancy rates from 2014 to 2015, a rate that now stands at 10% on average, statewide. Likewise, service provider organizations experienced a 21% increase in direct support staff one-year turnover rates from 2014 to 2015, a rate that now stands at an astonishing and unsustainable 23% on average, statewide. Simply put, if NYS does not make major investments in the direct support workforce this year, we risk staffing shortages that will cause provider organizations to collapse, and individuals with disabilities and their families to go without the vital supports on which they depend.

In order to stem this crisis, I ask that you include \$45M in your 2017-18 Executive Budget Proposal as the first year of a 6-year commitment that will eventually create a living wage for direct support workers. A living wage, commensurate with the job requirements and responsibilities, is the least we must do if we expect NYS to remain a model of supports for people with disabilities.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Chris Jacobs
Senator, 60th District

CHAIR
BANKS
COMMITTEE MEMBER
CHILDREN AND FAMILIES
CITIES
CIVIL SERVICE AND PENSIONS
CODES
CONSUMER PROTECTION
CRIME VICTIMS, CRIME AND CORRECTION
FINANCE
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LABOR
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SAVINO@NYSENATE.GOV

THE SENATE
STATE OF NEW YORK



DIANE J. SAVINO
SENATOR, 23rd DISTRICT

INDEPENDENT DEMOCRATIC CONFERENCE LIAISON
TO THE EXECUTIVE BRANCH

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PHONE: (718) 333-0311
FAX: (347) 492-3263

December 7, 2016

Honorable Andrew M. Cuomo
Governor
New York State
State Capitol
Albany, NY 12224



Dear Governor Cuomo:

I am writing to you to request an additional \$45 million, to be included as part of your 2017-2018 Executive Budget Proposal, to raise the salaries of Direct Support Professionals (DSP's) who support New Yorkers with intellectual and developmental disabilities and their families 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Nonprofit organizations that oversee these services rely on Medicaid for over 90% of their operating budgets and spend 80% of that amount on staff wages. These providers employ over 100,000 DSP's State-Wide, who earn, on average, anywhere between \$9 and \$13 per hour to provide life preserving support for one of our most vulnerable populations.

Due largely to these low wages for the sophisticated, stressful, and important work they do, too many workers leave these emotionally and physically difficult positions for less stressful and demanding employment, often for higher wages. As minimum wage rises, all of these positions will become minimum wage jobs which will make the increasing vacancy and turnover rates even higher. The health and safety issues appearing now due to the shrinking availability of qualified staff, will become unmanageable as there are fewer and fewer workers to fill these essential positions.

Advocates are rightly asking for an addition to the budget for this purpose and I urge you to include \$45 million in funding to pay a fair wage to DSP's in your 2017-2018 Executive Budget.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Diane Savino".

Diane J. Savino

New York State Senator Diane J. Savino

THE SENATE
STATE OF NEW YORK



SIMCHA FELDER

Senator, 17th District

December 14, 2016

Hon. Andrew M. Cuomo
Governor
New York State
State Capitol
Albany, NY 12224

Dear Governor Cuomo:

I am writing to you to request that you provide an additional \$45 million in the next State Budget specifically to raise the salaries of Direct Support Professionals (DSP's) who support New Yorkers with intellectual/developmental disabilities and their families 24 hours each day, seven days per week.

Nonprofit organizations that oversee these services rely on Medicaid for over 90% of their operating budgets and spend 80% of that on staff wages. These nonprofits employ over 100,000 DSP's State-wide who earn on average between \$10 and \$13 per hour to provide life preserving support for one of our most vulnerable populations.

Due largely to these low wages for the sophisticated and responsible work they do, too many workers leave these emotionally and physically difficult positions for less stressful and demanding employment, often for higher wages. As minimum wage rises, all of these positions will become minimum wage jobs which will make the increasing vacancy and turnover rates even higher. The health and safety issues appearing now due to the shrinking availability of qualified staff, will become unmanageable as there are fewer and fewer workers to fill these essential positions.

Advocates are rightly asking for an addition to the budget for this purpose and I urge you to include funding to pay a fair wage to DSP's in your next budget.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Simcha Felder".

Simcha Felder,
Senator, SD #17

SF:cn

CHAIR: CITIES • **COMMITTEES:** AGING • HEALTH • MENTAL HEALTH & DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES • VETERANS, HOMELAND SECURITY & MILITARY AFFAIRS
COMMERCE, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & SMALL BUSINESS • INFRASTRUCTURE & CAPITAL INVESTMENT • **TASK FORCE:** COUNTER TERRORISM & PUBLIC PROTECTION

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December 13, 2016

Hon. Andrew M. Cuomo
New York State Governor
State Capitol
Albany, N.Y. 12224

Dear Governor Cuomo:

I write to ask that, as part of your 2017-18 Executive Budget Proposal, you include \$45M to begin developing a living wage for direct support workers who provide services to people with disabilities.

The work associated with supporting people with disabilities is hardly minimum wage work. Direct support workers are highly skilled, must support people with any/all needs, and often must help manage challenging behaviors. Increasingly, people who provide direct supports are leaving this line of work as organizations that provide these services on behalf of NYS are no longer able to offer competitive compensation. These organizations would raise wages for direct support staff, however, 90% of their revenue comes from public dollars, more than 80% of which goes to worker compensation. Therefore, any increase in direct support staff wages means additional investments by NYS.

Due to lack of investments over a period of years, we now have a workforce crisis when it comes to direct support workers. Service provider organizations experienced a 20% increase in staff vacancy rates from 2014 to 2015, a rate that now stands at 10% on average, statewide. Likewise, service provider organizations experienced a 21% increase in direct support staff one-year turnover rates from 2014 to 2015, a rate that now stands at an astonishing and unsustainable 23% on average, statewide. Simply put, if NYS does not make major investments in the direct support workforce this year, we risk staffing shortages that will cause provider organizations to collapse, and individuals with disabilities and their families to go without the vital supports on which they depend.

In order to stem this crisis, I ask that you include \$45M in your 2017-18 Executive Budget Proposal as the first year of a 6-year commitment that will eventually create a living wage for direct support workers. A living wage, commensurate with the job requirements and responsibilities, is the least we must do if we expect NYS to remain a model of supports for people with disabilities.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "T F O'Mara".

Thomas F. O'Mara
NYS Senate – 58th District

THE SENATE
STATE OF NEW YORK



JAMES L. SEWARD

SENATOR, 51ST DISTRICT

December 1, 2016

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CHAIRMAN, MAJORITY PROGRAM
DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

CHAIRMAN
INSURANCE COMMITTEE

COMMITTEES

RULES
FINANCE
EDUCATION
HIGHER EDUCATION
AGRICULTURE
HEALTH
MENTAL HEALTH

Hon. Andrew M. Cuomo, Governor
Executive Chamber
Albany, New York 12224

Dear Governor Cuomo:

I am writing to request the inclusion of forty-five million dollars in the 2017-18 executive budget proposal for direct support professionals (DSPs), who care for individuals with developmental disabilities.

According to a coalition of developmental disabilities organizations, the average DSP makes ten to thirteen dollars per hour—far less than workers in other industries who will benefit from minimum wage increases to fifteen dollars per hour. Administrators and DSPs throughout my district with whom I have met on several occasions, report that direct care is rewarding but very difficult. For many, love for the work they do and the clients they care for is not enough, given such financial challenges and the availability of higher-paying and less challenging opportunities elsewhere. As a result, developmental disabilities services organizations regularly face high labor turnover rates at a time when substantial organizational changes need to be made in order to accommodate the mandated transitioning of clients into competitive employment from sheltered workshops. When positions are filled, new employees must undergo a lengthy training process which prolongs the effects of the absence of time spent caring for the state's population of individuals with developmental disabilities, which totals 130,000 individuals.

A forty-five million dollar appropriation will be well-spent toward addressing the unintended consequences of substantially increasing the minimum wage—a situation that I would describe as a crisis for developmental disabilities services providers—and help ensure that our most vulnerable citizens continue to receive high-quality care.

Thank you for your consideration of this request.

With best wishes, I remain

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "James L. Seward". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looping initial "J".

JAMES L. SEWARD
State Senator

JLS:dj:jt

bcc: Pat Knuth



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NEW YORK
STATE
SENATE
ALBANY, NEW YORK 12247



DAVID J. VALESKY
SENATOR, 53RD DISTRICT

DEPUTY LEADER, INDEPENDENT DEMOCRATIC CONFERENCE

VICE CHAIRMAN
HEALTH

COMMITTEES:
AGING
AGRICULTURE

COMMERCE, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
AND SMALL BUSINESS

EDUCATION
FINANCE
HIGHER EDUCATION
LOCAL GOVERNMENT
RULES
TRANSPORTATION

RURAL RESOURCES COMMISSION
SELECT COMMITTEE LIBRARIES
SELECT COMMITTEE SCIENCE,
TECHNOLOGY, INCUBATION &
ENTREPRENEURSHIP

December 5, 2016

Hon. Andrew M. Cuomo
Governor
New York State
State Capitol
Albany, NY 12224

Dear Governor Cuomo:

I am writing to you to request an additional \$45 million in the next State Budget specifically to raise the salaries of Direct Support Professionals (DSP's) who support New Yorkers with intellectual/developmental disabilities and their families 24 hours each day, seven days per week.

Nonprofit organizations that oversee these services rely on Medicaid for over 90% of their operating budgets and spend 80% of that on staff wages. These providers employ over 100,000 DSP's State-wide, who earn on average anywhere from \$9 to \$13 per hour to provide life preserving support for one of our most vulnerable populations.

Due largely to these low wages for the sophisticated and responsible work they do, too many workers leave these emotionally and physically difficult positions for less stressful and demanding employment, often for higher wages. As minimum wage rises, all of these positions will become minimum wage jobs which will make the increasing vacancy and turnover rates even higher. The health and safety issues appearing now due to the shrinking availability of qualified staff, will become unmanageable as there are fewer and fewer workers to fill these essential positions.

Advocates are rightly asking for an addition to the budget for this purpose and I urge you to include funding to pay a fair wage to DSP's in your next budget.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "David J. Valesky".

David J. Valesky
State Senator, 53rd District

DJV/jam

Independent Democratic Conference Whip

**Chair
Social Services**

Committees:

Alcoholism and Drug Abuse

Energy and Telecommunications

Infrastructure and Capital Investment

Insurance

Investigations and Government Operations

Mental Health & Developmental Disabilities

Racing, Gaming and Wagering

Rules

Veterans, Homeland Security
and Military Affairs

**THE SENATE
STATE OF NEW YORK**



**DAVID CARLUCCI
SENATOR, 38TH DISTRICT**

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Fax (845) 708-7701

Westchester Office:
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Ossining, NY 10562
(914) 941-2041
Fax (914) 941-2054

E-Mail Address:
Carlucci@nysenate.gov

November 17, 2016

The Honorable Andrew M. Cuomo
Governor of New York State
NYS Capitol Building
Albany, NY 12224

Dear Governor Cuomo,

As an elected official that represents many Direct Service Professionals, I am writing to ask that you consider allocating \$45 million dollars in this year's budget towards paying DSPs a living wage. The work done by DSPs is invaluable to people living with disabilities and this money would provide them a living wage.

The work associated with supporting people with disabilities is hardly minimum wage work. Direct support workers are highly skilled individuals that deal with difficult situations every day.

Increasingly, people who provide direct support are leaving this line of work as organizations that provide these services on behalf of NYS are no longer able to offer competitive compensation. These organizations would raise wages for direct support staff, however, 90% of their revenue comes from public dollars. Therefore, any increase in direct support staff wages means additional investments by NYS.

Due to lack of investments over a period of years, we now have a workforce crisis when it comes to direct support workers. Service provider organizations experienced a 20% increase in staff vacancy rates from 2014 to 2015, a rate that now stands at 10% on average, statewide. If NYS does not make major investments in the direct support workforce this year, we risk staffing shortages that will cause provider organizations to collapse and people living with disabilities will suffer greatly.

Direct Support Professionals are invaluable members of our society. A living wage, commensurate with the job requirements and responsibilities, is the least we must do if we

expect NYS to remain a model of supports for people with disabilities. If you should require further documentation of my support on this matter, please do not hesitate to contact my office at (518) 455-2991.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "D. Carlucci". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "D" and a stylized "C".

Senator David Carlucci
38th Senate District

THE SENATE
STATE OF NEW YORK



TIMOTHY M. KENNEDY
SENATOR, 63RD DISTRICT

RANKING MINORITY MEMBER
COMMERCE, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
& SMALL BUSINESS
INFRASTRUCTURE & CAPITAL INVESTMENTS
COMMITTEES
BANKS
CULTURAL AFFAIRS, TOURISM, PARKS
& RECREATION
ENERGY & TELECOMMUNICATIONS
FINANCE
INSURANCE
TRANSPORTATION

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E-MAIL ADDRESS:
KENNEDY@NYSenate.GOV

November 21, 2016

The Honorable Andrew M. Cuomo
Governor of New York State
NYS Capitol Building
Albany, New York 12224

Dear Governor Cuomo,

As you complete your 2017 – 2018 Executive Budget, I respectfully request that you provide an additional \$45 million in the next State Budget specifically to raise the salaries of Direct Support Professionals (DSPs) who support New Yorkers with intellectual/developmental disabilities and their families 24 hours each day, seven days per week.

Nonprofit organizations that oversee these services rely on Medicaid for over 90% of their operating budgets and spend 80% of that on staff wages. These nonprofits employ over 100,000 DSPs statewide who earn on average between \$10 and \$13 per hour to provide life-preserving support for one of our most vulnerable populations.

Unfortunately, these wages do not match the level of responsibility and sophistication in the work performed by DSPs, and far too many workers leave these emotionally and physically demanding positions for less stressful and difficult employment which often provides higher wages. As the minimum wage increases, all of these positions will become minimum wage jobs which will make the increasing vacancy and turnover rates even higher. The health and safety issues appearing now due to the shrinking availability of qualified staff will become unmanageable as there are fewer and fewer workers to fill these essential positions. Unless we act now, we may experience a dramatic and catastrophic shortage of people willing to work these rewarding, yet difficult jobs.

For these reasons, as you complete the 2017 – 2018 Executive Budget, I again urge you to provide an additional \$45 million in the next State Budget specifically to raise the salaries of Direct Support Professionals. This funding will help direct care workers continue to support and protect those who are most vulnerable in our society. Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Timothy M. Kennedy". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Timothy M. Kennedy
New York State Senator, 63rd District

CHAIRMAN
CULTURAL AFFAIRS

VICE-CHAIRMAN
SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY, INCUBATION
AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP

COMMITTEE MEMBER
AGING
AGRICULTURE
CITIES
COMMERCE, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
& SMALL BUSINESS
CONSUMER PROTECTION
ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION
HIGHER EDUCATION

**THE SENATE
STATE OF NEW YORK**



RICH FUNKE
Senator, 55TH District

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WEBSITE:
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November 10, 2016

Governor Andrew Cuomo
New York State Capitol
Albany, NY 12224

Dear Governor Cuomo,

I write to ask that, as part of your 2017-18 Executive Budget Proposal, you include \$45M to begin developing a living wage for direct support workers who provide services to people with disabilities.

The work associated with supporting people with disabilities is hardly minimum wage work. Direct support workers must be highly skilled. They support people with all needs. These direct support professionals also assist people with challenging behaviors.

Increasingly, people who provide direct supports are leaving this line of work. The organizations that provide the services on behalf of NYS are no longer able to offer competitive compensation. These same organizations would raise wages for direct support staff if they had the funds. However, 90% of their revenue comes from public dollars, more than 80% of which goes to worker compensation. Therefore, any increase in direct support staff wages means additional investments by NYS.

The lack of investments over a period of years has created a workforce crisis when it comes to direct support workers. Service provider organizations experienced a 21% increase in direct support staff one-year turnover rates from 2014 to 2015, a rate that now stands at an astonishing and unsustainable 23% on average, statewide. Simply put, if NYS does not make major investments in the direct support workforce this year, we risk staffing shortages that will cause provider organizations to collapse, and individuals with disabilities and their families to go without the vital supports on which they depend.

In order to correct this crisis, I ask that you include \$45M in your 2017-18 Executive Budget Proposal. This would be the first year of a 6-year commitment that will eventually create a living wage for direct support workers. This living wage, commensurate with the job requirements and responsibilities, is the very least we must do if we expect NYS to remain a model of supports for people with disabilities.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Rich Funke". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Rich Funke, 55th SD

CHAIRMAN
MENTAL HEALTH &
DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES
COMMITTEE MEMBER
CITIES
CIVIL SERVICE AND PENSIONS
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AND COMMISSIONS
ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION
HIGHER EDUCATION
LOCAL GOVERNMENT
VETERANS, HOMELAND SECURITY
AND MILITARY AFFAIRS

THE SENATE
STATE OF NEW YORK



ROBERT G. ORTT
SENATOR, 62ND DISTRICT

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Hon. Andrew M. Cuomo
NYS State Capitol Building
Albany, NY 12224

Dear Governor Cuomo:

I write to ask that, as part of your 2017-18 Executive Budget Proposal, you include \$45 million to begin developing a fair wage for direct support workers who provide services to people with disabilities.

Supporting people with disabilities is hardly minimum wage work. Direct support workers are highly skilled, support people with all needs, and manage challenging behaviors.

Increasingly, people who provide direct supports are leaving this line of work because organizations that provide these services on behalf of New York State are no longer able to offer competitive compensation. These organizations would raise wages for direct support staff; however, 90% of their revenue comes from public dollars, more than 80% of which goes to worker compensation. Therefore, any increase in direct support staff wages means additional investments by New York State.

Due to a lack of investment, we now have a workforce crisis when it comes to direct support workers. Service provider organizations experienced a 20% increase in staff vacancy rates from 2014 to 2015, a rate that now stands at 10% on average, statewide. Likewise, service provider organizations experienced a 21% increase in one-year turnover rates of direct support staff from 2014 to 2015, a rate that now stands at an astonishing and unsustainable 23% on average, statewide.

Recent increases to the minimum wage in other industries like fast food will only exacerbate this problem.

Simply put, if New York State does not make major investments in the direct support workforce this year, we risk staffing shortages that will cause provider organizations to collapse, and individuals with disabilities and their families will go without the vital supports on which they depend.

In order to stop this crisis, I ask that you include \$45 million in your 2017-18 Executive Budget Proposal, as the first year of a six-year commitment, that will eventually create a fair wage for direct support workers. A competitive wage, commensurate with the job requirements and responsibilities, is the least we must do if we expect New York to remain a model of supports for people with disabilities.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Robert G. Ort'.

Senator Robert G. Ort
Chairman, Senate Committee on Mental Health and Developmental Disabilities

**DEPUTY REPUBLICAN CONFERENCE WHIP
OF THE SENATE**

**CHAIRMAN
TRANSPORTATION**

**COMMITTEE MEMBER
COMMERCE, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
& SMALL BUSINESS**

**CONSUMER PROTECTION
EDUCATION**

**FINANCE
HIGHER EDUCATION**

**INFRASTRUCTURE & CAPITAL INVESTMENT
LABOR
RULES**

**THE SENATE
STATE OF NEW YORK**



**JOSEPH E. ROBACH
Senator, 56th District**

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**Andrew M. Cuomo, Governor
The State of New York
Executive Chamber
New York State Capitol Building
Albany, New York 12224**

Dear Governor Cuomo,

I am writing to request that, as we begin to engage in budget negotiations, we revisit some important issues facing individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities living in New York. It is critically important that we focus on paying a fair wage to Direct Support Professionals (DSP's) and increasing housing opportunities for the disabled. As you may know, my own sister has a developmental disability, so I am very familiar with the challenges that come along with this situation.

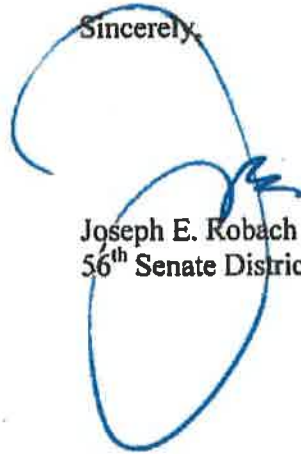
Direct Support Professionals support those with intellectual and developmental disabilities and their families 24 hours each day, seven days per week. Due largely to low wages for the sophisticated and responsible work they do, too many workers leave these emotionally and physically difficult positions for less stressful and demanding employment, often for higher wages. As minimum wage rises, these positions will become minimum wage jobs which will make the increasing vacancy and turnover rates even higher. The health and safety issues appearing now due to the shrinking availability of qualified staff, will become unmanageable as there are fewer and fewer workers to fill these essential positions. I am intimately aware of the importance of hiring, retaining and supporting the direct support professionals who care for our loved ones. The work they do is significantly important for individuals with disabilities and their families.

Furthermore, I ask that we address the issue of housing that many individuals living with intellectual and developmental disabilities face. It is critically important that we allocate all the resources we can to address this need. These individuals and their families need New York State to step up and do more to provide safe, secure and quality housing options.

Again, I urge you to include funding to pay a fair wage to DSP's in the next budget and apply whatever resources we can to address the ongoing housing issues New Yorkers with disabilities face. I appreciate the opportunity to share with you my support of revisiting these important issues. Please feel free to have your staff contact my office directly about this matter at (585) 225-3650.

Best regards!

Sincerely,



Joseph E. Robach
56th Senate District