



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Robert G. Ortt

Ortt, State Senate Majority Advance Budget That's Fair to Direct Care

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| ISSUE: **SENATE BUDGET RESOLUTION, DIRECT SERVICE PROFESSIONALS, MINIMUM WAGE**



State Senator Rob Ortt (R,C,I – North Tonawanda) today announced the Senate Republican Majority has put forth a multifaceted 2017-18 budget plan that includes \$45 million to support wage increases for direct care professionals. Senator Ortt, who voted in favor of the Senate's one-house budget yesterday, has been fighting to ensure the necessary funds are included in the state budget, so that individuals with special needs can continue to receive the care they deserve.

Senator Ortt, Chair of the Senate's Mental Health and Developmental Disabilities Committee, said,

"This is a tremendous step on an issue that is very dear to me - one that we have been working on diligently over the past year. Senate Republicans are standing shoulder to shoulder with direct care professionals, individuals in the disability community, and nonprofit agencies who care for our most vulnerable population across the state. These employees deserve a fair living wage, and we will continue to fight for them in our state capital. This goes beyond the state's fiscal obligation to these providers - it's a moral imperative to help those most in need and we cannot leave them behind."

Direct care professionals provide critical state services for individuals with autism, serious brain injury, cerebral palsy, Down syndrome, and other developmental and intellectual disabilities.

Currently, direct service professionals (DSPs) earn an average of \$10-\$13 per hour – just above the state's minimum wage. To adequately meet the needs of direct care workers, the proposal provides \$45 million annually to help ensure competitive salaries while reducing turnover rates and overtime costs for the nonprofits, and recruit qualified staff for the difficult work. Without new funding to the DSP employers, the salary gap with minimum wage workers will lead to increased vacancies in the field as qualified individuals seek less strenuous work, such as in the fast food industry.

A final state budget is expected to be adopted by April 1.