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NEW YORK
DISABILITY
ADVOCATES

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**TESTIMONY SUBMITTED TO THE
NEW YORK STATE LEGISLATURE**

Joint Hearing of the
Senate Finance and Assembly Ways and Means Committees
2020-2021 Executive Budget
Mental Hygiene

Presented by

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for

New York Disability Advocates (NYDA)

February 3, 2020

Dear Chairwomen Krueger and Weinstein, Senator Carlucci and Assemblywoman Gunther and other members of the Senate and Assembly,

We speak to you today not as executives of our individual agencies, but as a representatives of New York Disability Advocates (NYDA), a newly formed coalition of more than 300 voluntary providers who are instrumental in delivering services and supports to the 140,000 New Yorkers with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

While we have come to you independently for years to advocate for our field and the people we serve, today we come to you as one. Our members hold varying perspectives and priorities on some matters. But our single, driving goal is shared: the sustainability of comprehensive, quality supports and services for New Yorkers with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

Recognizing the urgency and necessity of ensuring that common goal, we now come to you united as New York Disability Advocates—300 providers calling on you to hear the most essential messages from our field on behalf of the vulnerable New Yorkers we support.

Across the state, these organizations and the more than 120,000 people they employ provide lifelong, comprehensive, individualized services to support people with intellectual and developmental disabilities in all areas of their lives. In addition to delivering physical and behavioral health services, they assist with transportation, housing, medication administration, cooking, feeding, developing personal care skills, community living, employment, and many other crucial services.

As part of a broad coalition of over 40 associations across the Human Services sector, we are here today to ask the State to facilitate the continuation of this care and stabilize the non-profit sector by providing a 3% increase in investment annually for the next five years. We are asking for 3 for 5.

We understand the state is facing financial headwinds, however achieving 3 for 5 is critical to ensuring continuity of care for New Yorkers throughout the state with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

Right now, critical services are in jeopardy. Over the last decade, provider organizations have received only one cost-of-living funding increase—of just 0.02 percent—and have experienced \$2.6 billion in cuts, pushing many provider agencies to the brink of insolvency. In a Statewide survey that we conducted, nearly half of them have less than 40 days of cash on hand. A third of providers reported having to reduce services or cut programs completely in the last three years due to funding constraints—impacting almost 50,000 New Yorkers with intellectual and developmental disabilities and more than 30,000 employees who support these individuals. And all over New York, providers are operating with minimal or outdated technology and deteriorating infrastructure.

While non-profit provider organizations have experienced draconian cuts, state-operated programs have received a cost of living increase annually for the last 7 years.

Stagnant funding also affects employment. Provider organizations employ more than 120,000 people across the state, the majority of whom are women and minorities. Many of these organizations are the largest employers in their counties, playing a vital role in the local economies.

Organizations are doing what they can to operate within these constraints and have taken a variety of steps to lower their costs, with 4 out of 5 having to slash employee benefits. Yet, they are running out of options and simply cannot continue to do more with less.

State funding is the lifeblood of care for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Non-profit provider organizations rely on Medicaid for over 90 percent of their funding. New York has a mandate to provide services to these populations, and voluntary organizations are well-positioned to deliver care cost-effectively. Eighty-five to 90 percent of every dollar goes directly to critical services.

The communities we serve deserve the same access to quality care as every other New Yorker. They deserve opportunities to lead independent, fulfilling lives and participate in their communities. We implore you to champion the lives of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities and commit to support for an annual 3% funding investment for the next five years.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

