



**The Self-Advocacy Association of New York State, Inc.
Testimony for the Joint Legislative Hearing on the Executive
Budget for 2012-2013
February 14, 2012**

Good afternoon, Chairman DeFrancisco, Chairman Farrell, Chairman Ortiz, Chairman McDonald and members of this important Joint Legislative Committee. My name is Shameka Andrews, Co-Policy Director of the Self-Advocacy Association of New York State (SANYS). Joining me today is Clint Perrin, Co-Policy Director of SANYS. We are here today to present some key points from SANYS's Legislative Platform for 2012.

SANYS is an organization run by and for people with developmental disabilities. Our mission is to help people with developmental disabilities speak up for themselves and others. That is what we are doing here today.

We are speaking for Richard, who lives across the Hudson River in Troy, in a neighborhood and community that he chose. Richard once lived in an institution, where he experienced abuse and then in a few group living situations that didn't suit his needs. He now lives in his own apartment and gets support from direct support professional staff and from his friends and neighbors in his community. He also benefits from the presence of a paid neighbor, who also provides support if needed. A sign on Richard's wall says in part, "I do my own business."

We are also speaking for Judy, who uses a unique communication device that she controls with her a on her forehead. Judy just finished a year as an AmeriCorps member, providing disabilities awareness presentations throughout her community. She's looking for a job and an opportunity to share her skills and talents.

And we are speaking for many thousands of people who are living in residences or in their own place or who are waiting for an opportunity for support services, who simply want every one wants, a chance to live in a neighborhood, have friends, share their skills and contribute to their community. That is what the People First Waiver should be about.

To that end, the Board of SANYS developed the following list of ideas that we think will put people first in both the 2012 Budget and the People First Waiver.

SANYS 2012 Legislative Platform—Key Points

Putting People First in the Budget and the People First Waiver

- Spend all money available to OPWDD and dedicate all resources in a **People First** way.
- **Keep all the money currently in OPWDD's budget**, including Medicaid funds at or as close to the current level as possible. SANYS believes the 1115 Waiver is the only way that OPWDD can preserve current funds and create a new system of support over time.
- Encourage and **support provider agencies to reinvest** the funds they receive so that more people can be supported with existing funds; **individualized supports** are an important way to do this.
- We support a **phase out of funding state operated services** over time and a move of all those supported by state operated funds to community based services with the supports they need.
- Through **provider reinvestment and less State operated costs**, OPWDD can provide supports for the many people on **waiting lists**.
- **Individualized supports** are more important than ever in these challenging budget times because they are based on what a person needs, not a program model of services. We have many people living in large, costly facilities in New York. We need to help people create lives in their community. We are not advocating to close group homes or to eliminate community residential living as a choice for people who want and need that type of support. We **are** advocating for significant increases in choices and opportunities where people, with the help of families and/or circles of support and provider agencies, create living and work or day situations that meet their needs and desires.
- The People First Waiver funding must provide a pool of funds to support learning and training around the development and support of individualized services. We support the development of regional based centers for innovation and training that will provide needed supports to truly develop a person-centered system. *The success of the People First Waiver will depend on significant new thinking and new ideas. We need to learn new ways of providing supports in the community.*
- Related to home health care for people with physical disabilities: **Expand consumer directed** options and do all we can as a state to support people in their communities instead of nursing homes.
- **OPWDD** should aggressively pursue the **Community First Choice Option**, a new, cross disability community-based Medicaid state plan service, which includes a variety of community based supports based on functional needs not diagnosis or age.

- People with developmental disabilities want to work and contribute. We have a lot to offer. We need increased opportunities and support for **employment, included community service** and other activities that help connect us with our communities.

**Regarding the Governor's 2012 Budget
SANYS strongly supports:**

- Governor Cuomo's call to finally create an **Olmstead Plan** that will ensure that, New York supports all people with disabilities to live and work, volunteer or do interesting things in their communities in the most integrated setting possible.
- The proposed increase in **Family Support Services Funds**. Families need flexible funding to support their school aged and adult children who are living at home.
- The proposed funds to provide opportunities for new **individualized supports** that will help with reinvestment of existing resources and support many people to receive the services they need and want.
- The proposed closure of state facilities at the Taconic and Finger Lakes DDSO's. Our challenge as a system is to close these facilities in a people first way, with person centered and careful planning.
- The proposed funding to move students out of state residential schools back to their NY home communities. We are New Yorkers and we don't need to send our children to out of state schools. We can give kids what they need right in their own communities.

Finally, SANYS encourages an attitude of "me to we" among all interested parties. We call upon everyone to understand that in these challenging times, advocates from all points of view must all come to the table and talk about how we spend available resources in ways that best support people and their families. Everyone needs to be willing to put some of their own priorities to the side and work together to a create system of support that can be sustained.

**Approved by the Board of the Self-Advocacy Association of New York State, Inc.
February 9, 2012. For additional information please contact:**

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