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**SUSAN SERINO**  
41<sup>ST</sup> District

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April 29, 2021

Dr. Theodore Kastner, Commissioner  
Office for People with Developmental Disabilities  
44 Holland Ave  
Albany, NY 12229

Re: OPWDD Rate Cuts

Dear Commissioner Kastner:

I am writing to you with urgent concerns over the planned rate reductions by the Office for People with Developmental Disabilities (OPWDD) for the voluntary residential program starting May 1, 2021, for instances when residents are not present in agency run residences. I join with my colleagues in asking that you delay any such plan at least 90 days and seek further input from stakeholders to determine another course of action that could better serve those with intellectual/developmental disabilities (I/DD), their families and those that serve them.

As you are acutely aware, the COVID-19 pandemic has exacted a devastating toll on I/DD New Yorkers and their families, and the virus necessitated that voluntary providers expend millions of dollars to ensure the safety of residents and staff. Any rate reductions would threaten to jeopardize the ability of these providers to continue to safely provide the supports and care necessary for their residents.

As I understand, the cuts that would begin on May 1, 2021 were originally proposed in October of last year, at a time when the State was facing significant fiscal challenges. However since that time, the federal government has since provided more than \$12 billion in federal aid to New York State, and it especially now would not be a prudent step to continue with such cuts, particularly as the FY 2022 Enacted State Budget provided for a more than \$12 million increase in funding for OPWDD. It is of paramount importance that the State prioritizes providing funding to those who were most significantly impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, including I/DD New Yorkers, their families, and those that serve and care for them.

I respectfully urge you to reconsider these cuts, and ask that you allow ample opportunity for stakeholders to further weigh-in on this issue by delaying any such cuts for at least 90 days.

I appreciate your attention and consideration on this urgent matter, and I look forward to working with you to ensure New York State is doing all it can for this vulnerable population.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Sue Serino". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned below the word "Sincerely,".

Senator Sue Serino  
41<sup>st</sup> District