

I have a developmentally disabled loved one and we are proud voting New Yorkers. Through my connection to Supporting Our Youth & Adults Network (www.soyan.org) I learned about the Governor's proposed 2024/25 Budget. I believe OPWDD's Self-Direction model of support and service delivery provides my loved one with individualized opportunities that align with OPWDD's mission: *we help people with developmental disabilities live richer lives!*

The Governor must increase the COLA to 3.2 % for direct support professionals and all related OPWDD categories especially all Self-Direction budget categories: support broker, Personal Resource Account, fiscal intermediaries, individual goods and services (IDGS) and state-only funded categories. These categories have not increased in years. Last year's HCBS Waiver Amendment removed the IDGS chart in order to make it easier for adjustments to these capped budget lines. This is critical for providing flexibility and choice for the Self-directed New Yorker.

My loved one relies on Direct Care Professionals (DSPs), for support in his daily life. I find it difficult to recruit and hire DSPs to support my loved one, leaving him isolated and without access to participate in his community. DSPs are essential workers. Please keep our son and so many others like him safe, healthy, and productive members of our community and invest in wages for DSPs. Without compensated direct support staff the OPWDD system cannot meet its mission.

I am grateful for the Governor's investment in community living with the continuation of the housing subsidy adjustment aligned with HUD Fair Market Rates 2024. I want to better understand how the funding to create more affordable housing for people with developmental disabilities will be used. Every disabled adult deserves the right to not be forced into a certified group home or nursing home.

I am grateful for the Governor's creation of a pathway permitting medication management duties for DSPs who support people living in the community. This will ensure accessibility to live in the community as they age. People with developmental disabilities have medical and behavioral comorbidities, just like people without disabilities that require prescribed medications. I note that for people also using [Consumer Directed Personal Care Assistance \(CDPap\)](#) to support living safely in the community and needing medication management support, CDPap hours may be reduced if Com Hab Staff are allowed to provide the same support. I urge the Governor to consider how a reduction in CDPap support hours may adversely affect people with developmental disabilities health, safety and access to the community. Taking medications should not mean people with developmental disabilities' only living options are certified group homes and nursing homes.

I am grateful for the Governor's \$1Million commitment to the Special Olympics. My loved one looks forward to their connection with teammates, coaches and the pomp and circumstance of the competitions. They smile from ear to ear!

[Expanding swim safety](#) in NYS to all children must be inclusive. This is a great opportunity for NYS senators and assembly members and local counties and towns to work together building accessible and inclusive community centers in underserved areas and upgrading existing community pools and NYS park pools. Our children matter!

I appreciate your attention. I look forward to your support for people with developmental disabilities through ongoing increased funding for OPWDD – especially the Self-Direction service and support delivery model.