**SAMPLE LETTER TO THE EDITOR FROM A PARENT**

As the parent of a child with autism (or cerebral palsy, Down syndrome, a serious brain injury, or other intellectual or developmental disability), I write as a supporter of the ***#bFair2DirectCare Coalition’s*** “**Continuing The Fight For A Living Wage**” Campaign.

When I learned my child (son/daughter) had a disability, I was gratified to find support for my whole family right in the community. Day programs, transportation, job coaching, residential support, medical support, and recreation, all right here, staffed by dedicated and caring direct support professionals who treat *my* son/daughter like they are a part of *their* family.

Direct support professionals (DSP) working for not-for-profit organizations help me around the clock and are a part of the fabric that holds our communities together. They help my child achieve his/her best and be a part of the community. Increasingly, however, we are losing these vital workers to less demanding jobs, like fast food restaurants and big box stores, that suddenly pay as much as, if not more, than these vital jobs. Flat state government funding and new wage and benefit mandates created this growing worker shortage. I want to thank the Governor and the Legislature for including raises in the current budget to begin to address the crisis and their commitment to include additional support in April of 2018. However, DSP workers can't wait another four years to be paid a Living Wage. We continue to face a crisis that is getting worse. New York State needs to accelerate funding for a living wage for DSP worker salaries over the next three years. I would urge the Governor and the Legislature to begin to fund this accelerated increase beginning in January of 2019.

Please support fair pay for direct support professionals and other vital staff that help support tens of thousands of New Yorkers by calling and writing your state legislators and Governor Cuomo. Tell them you support the “Continuing The Fight For A Living Wage” campaign calling on New York State to provide fair pay for the DSPs working in every community across the state. Tell them you want them to #bFair2DirectCare and help us keep our communities vibrant and inclusive of all.

Please follow and like us on Facebook (@BFair2DirectCare) and Twitter (#bFair2DirectCare).

Thank you for your support for my family and for families across New York.