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## **Governmental Affairs Update**

On Friday evening, the Senate and Assembly passed, and then Governor Murphy signed the Fiscal Year 2024 State Budget which includes hundreds of millions in new money to support people with intellectual and developmental disabilities and their families. In addition to the many items that the Governor included in his original proposal, (detailed further down in this update), the Legislature, in response to our advocacy, added funding to increase the behavioral rates within the fee-for-service system. Language in the budget indicates that the behavioral supports assessment/plan development rate was increased to \$22.05 for each 15 minutes and the behavioral supports monitoring rate was increased to \$8.26 for each 15 minutes. The previous rates were \$19.60 and \$7.34 respectively. Furthermore, it appears the Legislature added \$3 million to the existing \$72 million in state and federal funding proposed by the Governor for the across-the-board rate increase. Also, the Legislature increased the Private Duty Nursing rate to \$63 when the service is delivered by a nurse and to \$51 when the service is delivered by an LPN. This is up from \$62 for a nurse and \$50 for an LPN in the Governor's February proposal. These legislative add-ons are on top of the existing appropriations for people with IDD and their families presented in Governor Murphy's spending plan. This includes:

- \$72 million in state and federal funding for a 3% across-the-board increase to the fee for service rates.
- \$41.7 million to increase Direct Support Professional wages (and supervisor and manager wages to avoid compression issues) ahead of the next minimum wage increase on January 1, 2024.
- \$13 million to help move people out of nursing homes and institutional settings.
- \$250,000 for a supports brokerage rate increase for those who self-direct services
- \$100 million in one-time dollars for Home and Community Based Services (This will go toward things like loan redemption, tuition reimbursement and workforce incentives.)

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- \$3.2 million to offer the START model in NJ which includes regional response teams and other resources and supports for people with IDD and behavioral challenges. (START = Systemic, Therapeutic, Assessment, Resources and Treatment).
  - \$5 million within DDD for a 10% increase in the rents for group home providers - the first increase of these rents that group home providers have seen in 10 years.
  - \$5 million in state and federal dollars to address contracted emergency beds to better align with those who need those services and to help decrease the need for hospitalizations.
  - 7.5% increase to early intervention rates within the Department of Health.

We want to thank everyone who participated in our action alerts, shared them on social media and amplified our budget message throughout the year. Together, we successfully advocated for many of the critical needs facing our community and now appropriations in this budget will go a long way to boost the service delivery system and the thousands of individuals it serves.