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**Memorandum in Support
S.7716 (Carlucci) and A.7728 (Buttenschon)**

**ON SENATE MENTAL HEALTH/DEVELOPMENTAL
DISABILITIES COMMITTEE AGENDA**

AN ACT to amend the mental hygiene law to establish the office of the independent intellectual and developmental disability ombudsman program for the purpose of assisting individuals with intellectual or developmental disabilities to ensure that they receive coverage from managed care organizations

The New York Alliance for Inclusion & Innovation (New York Alliance) supports legislation to create an independent intellectual and developmental disability ombudsman program. The sector has begun its transition to Medicaid managed care. S.7716 and A.7728 are important and timely bills to create an independent ombudsman program that would be independent, impartial and free of charge to people and families when complaints require investigation.

The New York Alliance is a statewide association representing 175 not-for-profit provider agencies serving people with disabilities. The New York Alliance envisions a society where people with disabilities are contributing citizens with equal rights and the ability to live full, productive and meaningful lives. The association is the result of a recent merger of two former associations: the NYS Association of Community and Residential Agencies (NYSACRA) and the NYS Rehabilitation Association (NYSRA).

We agree with the sponsors that the role of an ombudsman is essential in publically funded human services delivery systems and is especially vital when new systems are put in place. . Given the complex needs of people with I/DD and the challenges they oftentimes face, understanding changes to their services and benefits and the complicated language generally associated with Medicaid underscores the necessity for a specialized I/DD Ombudsman Program.

The specialized Ombudsman would be tasked with assisting people in New York's I/DD system and their families to navigate the new managed care environment, which includes but is not limited to:

- denials;
- complaints and grievances;
- quality monitoring;



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- health outcomes measures and display metrics on specialized, I/DD provider-led managed care plans and other managed care entities.

While the NYS Office for People With Developmental Disabilities continues to prepare the field for the move to Medicaid managed care, the NY Alliance believes that the implementation of the I/DD health home initiative through Care Coordination Organizations, has been the first phase of the managed care transition. Therefore, the specialized I/DD Ombudsman program might be incorporated into the current CCO-health home structure to enable people receiving such services to have access to an independent, third-party authority with the ability to lodge complaints separate from the CCO and the State of New York and to ensure that such grievances are fairly examined and considered.

The New York Alliance strongly supports S.7716 and A.7728.

For more information, contact:

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