

**Cerebral Palsy Associations
of New York State, Inc.**
Mike Alvaro, *President & CEO*

**Developmental Disabilities Alliance
of WNY**
Mindy Cervoni, *President*

**Inter Agency Council of Developmental
Disabilities, Inc.**
Winifred Schiff, *Chief Executive Officer*

**New York Alliance for Inclusion &
Innovation**
Michael Seereiter, *President & CEO*

**New York Association of Emerging &
Multicultural Providers, Inc.**
Yvette Watts, *Executive Director*

The Arc New York
Erik Geizer, *Chief Executive Officer*

November 19, 2024

Commissioner James McDonald, M.D., M.P.H
New York State Department of Health
Corning Tower
Empire State Plaza
Albany, NY 12237

Director Blake Washington
Division of the Budget
State Capitol Building
Albany, NY 12210

Acting Commissioner Willow Baer
Office for People with Developmental Disabilities
44 Holland Ave.
Albany, NY 12208

Dear Commissioner McDonald, Director Washington, and Acting Commissioner Baer:

New York Disability Advocates (NYDA) is a statewide coalition of the nonprofit organizations that provide vital services and support to New Yorkers with intellectual and developmental disabilities. We are reaching out with a pressing concern: The final approval and distribution of the July 1, 2024 rates is now more than four months late.

The absence of approved rates has compounded the challenge of running effective and sustainable organizations. NYDA members have never wavered in our commitment to provide the highest quality of care to the people we serve. Yet, we have been forced to make critical decisions in a financial vacuum and have been unable to ascertain what resources will be available to support our operations and staffing. While we have received draft rates, history has shown that finalizing plans for the future before the final rates are distributed is unwise, at best.

Agencies across the state face escalating operational costs, including health insurance renewals, property insurance increases, and cybersecurity expenses. However, there is no clear plan for funding future minimum wage adjustments, nor transparency into how the state calculated the most recent minimum wage increase.

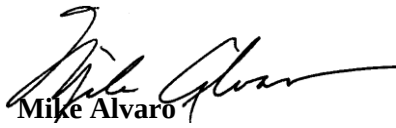
Our nonprofit agencies are held to high standards in all areas: providing high quality supports and services, delivering precise billing, upholding extensive documentation requirements, completing frequent audits, and maintaining comprehensive and rigorous reporting protocols. However, these demands come with no reciprocal assurance from the state that rates will be approved and provided in a timely fashion. The promised retroactive rate adjustment offers little comfort or ability for nonprofit agencies to implement wage increases or to manage the other cost increases that we are experiencing, when we do not have the liquidity to do so.

The most profound impact is felt by the direct support, frontline supervisor and other frontline staff who live paycheck to paycheck. Due to liquidity challenges, it is very difficult to provide wage increases to frontline staff when we have no clear timeline of when funds will be released by the state. Delays in the release of these funds drive staff to find jobs elsewhere when we are already facing a turnover crisis.

In addition to addressing these immediate concerns, we strongly urge the restoration of rate-setting authority to the Office for People with Developmental Disabilities (OPWDD) from the Department of Health (DOH). OPWDD possesses the programmatic expertise and operational understanding necessary to develop rates that reflect the unique needs of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities and the providers who support them. Returning this authority to OPWDD will ensure rates are calculated and distributed more effectively, helping to mitigate delays and improve the responsiveness of the rate-setting process.

Therefore, we stand ready with you to ensure people with intellectual and developmental disabilities continue to receive the highest quality services. It is imperative that the state release the July 1, 2024 rates so we can build for the future.

Sincerely,



Mike Alvaro
Cerebral Palsy Associations of NYS



Mindy Cervoni
Developmental Disabilities Alliance of Western NY



Winifred Schiff
Inter Agency Council of Developmental Disabilities, Inc.



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