



NEW YORK DISABILITY ADVOCATES

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LEGISLATORS, PROVIDERS, AND PARENTS JOINED DISABILITY ADVOCATES AND ORGANIZATIONS FOR NEW YORK CITY RALLY TO ADDRESS STAFFING CRISIS OF DIRECT SERVICE PROFESSIONALS

Speakers Advocated for Solutions as Crisis Forces Service Reductions, Program Closures, and Further Harms 140,000+ New Yorkers with Developmental Disabilities

New York City, NY— On Tuesday, members of New York Disability Advocates (NYDA), NYC FAIR, and Save Our Services (SOS) held a rally to address the state's workforce crisis of Direct Service Professionals (DSPs). DSPs provide critical life support and services to more than 140,000 New Yorkers with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD), but due to inadequate funding provider agencies are not able to provide competitive wages to recruit or retain their workforce.

Joining the groups were, Assembly members David Weprin and Joanne Simons, with remarks from State Senator John Mannion and Assembly member Tom Abinanti, alongside Direct Support Professionals (DSPs), self-advocates, and parents. Video of the event can be found on [NYDA's Facebook page](#).

Senator John W. Mannion, Chairman of the Disabilities Committee, said, "New York must invest \$500M to begin addressing the immediate and dire workforce crisis for intellectual and developmental disability services - and that's better pay, more training, tuition credits, and mentoring programs. That is the response that's needed to match the magnitude of the problem and it's going to take our collective voices to make it happen. I commend and thank the organizers and attendees of today's rally for fighting for fairness and equality for our friends, neighbors, and loved ones with an I/DD."

"Our most vulnerable are the mercy of a broken system, that hurts not helps them. That victimizes them with indifference and neglect, that values saving money more than serving people," said **Assembly member Tom Abinanti, Chair of the NY Assembly Committee on**



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Peoples with Disabilities. “Serving vulnerable people should be a career not just a job. One that is rewarded with respect and promotions on a career ladder. One that pays a living wage.”

“For over a decade, New York State has not provided any funding to increase DSP pay rates, to offset the negative impacts our community has felt from the increased minimum wage mandate,” said **Tom McAlvanah, President of the New York Disability Advocates.** “Our DSP workers are people too; they need the same thing that we all need, a living wage and stability. Our current funding system calls them essential workers, but it fails to provide them with their essential needs.”

New York State has failed to invest in sustaining essential support and services for New Yorkers with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD). Without adequate funding, I/DD providers are unable to offer competitive wages to entice workers for this critical role and compete against the employment incentives of the food and retail sectors.

The results of a recent survey conducted by New York Disability Advocates found that nearly 74% of DSP provider agencies experienced a higher vacancy rate than before the pandemic. Nearly half of surveyed agencies reported that they had to close programs or reduce operations due to staffing shortages. Unfortunately, without adequate funding provider agencies cannot provide wages competitive with sectors such as food service and retail to entice new workers.

The DSP workforce emergency affects continuity and consistency in the lives of the people being served. DSP workforce instability also affects provider agencies, as they struggle to maintain an adequate workforce and living wage for the 97,000 DSPs and ensure positive outcomes for the I/DD individuals to whom they provide critical supports and services.

About New York Disability Advocates (NYDA)

(NYDA) is a statewide coalition of more than 300 non-profit organizations providing vital services and support to more than 125,000 New Yorkers with intellectual and developmental disabilities.