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**NEW YORK DISABILITY ADVOCATES JOINED BY NEW YORK STATE
LEGISLATORS TO DISCUSS WORKFORCE CRISIS FACING THE INTELLECTUAL
AND DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITY COMMUNITY**

Legislators and Speakers Shared Assessments of the 2022 Legislative Session, the I/DD Sector's Role, and Discussed New Data from Provider Agencies

Albany, NY— New York Disability Advocates (NYDA) hosted a roundtable with New York State Senators and Assembly Members to discuss the 2022 legislative priorities of New York's I/DD community on Wednesday, December 15th. Joining NYDA were Senator John Mannion, *Chairman of Committee on Disabilities*, Senator Mike Martucci, Senator Fred Akshar, Senator John Brooks, Senator Simcha Felder, Assemblymember Tom Abinanti, *Chair of Committee on People with Disabilities*, Assemblymember Melissa Miller, and Assemblymember Chris Burdick. Video of the event can be found on NYDA's Facebook page: [NYDA December Legislative Roundtable](#).

“We thank the Senators and Assembly Members that came today to hear and discuss with us directly of what New York’s I/DD community needs in 2022 to pull ourselves out of this crisis and create a sustainable, working system of support,” said **Tom McAlvanah, President of the New York Disability Advocates**. “There are over 140,000 individuals with I/DD throughout New York State. For nearly a decade, they, their families, support staff, provider agencies have been contending with a neglect of funding, which has resulted in a full-blown crisis. We look forward to working with New York’s legislature to address these long-standing issues in 2022.”

“In terms of a workforce, we are in an immediate crisis. We are developing legislation for a tax credit for DSPs and making sure there are incentives to not only draw them into the profession, but keep them in the profession,” said **Senator John Mannion, Chairman of the Committee on Disabilities**. “Not only will we be doing the right thing for the members of our community that need our help, but this could even become an economic driver.”

“We are not at a crossroads—our toes are at the edge of a cliff. We have to make sure that we sustain recurring funding in this budget to once and for all fill this hole and allow us to truly address the issue with wages,” said **Senator Mike Martucci**. “These are human rights issues, and we are at a critical point where we must make a change.”

BROOKS

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“There are certain things that transcend politics, and this space is one of those things. This is an issue we should all take on because it is for the betterment of our community,” said **Senator Fred Akshar**. “At the end of the day, the government has a fundamental and moral obligation to take care of those who need help.”

“New York's system for serving people with disabilities is on the verge of collapsing,” said **Assemblymember Tom Abinanti, Chair, Committee on People with Disabilities**. “There is a critical workforce shortage from top to bottom – entry-level to management to behavioral and medical staff. We all need to do our part to solve it. We need to make working in this field a career, not just a job. People need to be able to advance, earn more at each step and feel they are appreciated.”

“We’re at severe risk of people dying because they’re not getting the care they need. In order to rectify this crisis, we need a long-term annual budget commitment,” said **Assemblymember Melissa Miller**. “The workers in this field do important jobs and we are not going to get people to come to this field unless we make it worth their while and show them how much we value their work.”

“I was happy to join some of my colleagues in the Legislature, along with advocates for people with disabilities from around New York State for a roundtable discussion on how to best serve and provide for the disabled community in the upcoming legislative session,” said **Assemblymember Karen McMahon (D-Amherst) [or (D-146th AD)]**. “We are all aware there is a significant workforce crisis facing the I/DD community and we must focus our efforts on creative solutions to this problem. After our discussion today, I am encouraged by the commitment demonstrated by all parties ahead of our return to Albany.”

“I am very encouraged by the completely different tone in Albany. I honestly feel we are going to make some real headway, but we cannot do it without the work of the advocacy community,” said **Assemblymember Chris Burdick**. “We have a great opportunity now. Let us seize that opportunity this legislative season and in the upcoming budget.”

During the roundtable, NYDA outlined the primary focus of its 2022 legislative priorities: secure the necessary investments needed to create a robust care economy for New York State. This includes addressing the Direct Support Professional (DSP) workforce crisis. For nearly a decade New York State 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. An October, NYDA survey found there are 23,563 vacant DSP positions across the state, with 93.1% of agencies having reported a decrease in the number of job applications.

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COLA Implementation and Workforce Funding

To address this crisis, NYDA is calling upon Governor Hochul, and New York legislators to implement the full 5.4% COLA in the FY 2023 State Budget, to compensate for the deficit payments of the last years, which has resulted in the current workforce crisis. Full implementation of the COLA would immediately improve recruitment and retention of workers employed by voluntary providers, as well as provide for inflationary cost increases.

NYDA is also calling on the State to build on the investment that the Federal Government has made to make permanent the 20% DSP Wage Bonus and authorize providers to build this enhancement into their wages moving forward. Additionally, to recognize the life-preserving, essential, yet demanding work of Direct Support Professionals (DSP), NYDA is calling on the state to implement a personal DSP income tax credit.

Retention and Education

Recognizing that recruitment and funding are only part of the solution to solve the workforce crisis that the I/DD community is currently facing, NYDA will also be prioritizing the implementation of professional DSP development programs to increase retention rates. SUNY and CUNY Direct Support Professional Credit and Career Ladder programs will serve as a pipeline for students to enter a successful career in the human services field. Once in the field, established career pathways and advanced training opportunities, through DSP credentialing programs, will enable DSPs to build upon their competencies and experience, improving and sustaining the I/DD sector through the future.

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.