



## Newsday INVESTIGATES

### FIRED OVER FACEBOOK COMMENT

Volunteer firefighter, dismissed after post about ICE, is suing her former department

A2-3 | VIDEO AT NEWSDAY.TV



Mineola marching band members practice on Tuesday.

## FIRST IN NEWSDAY

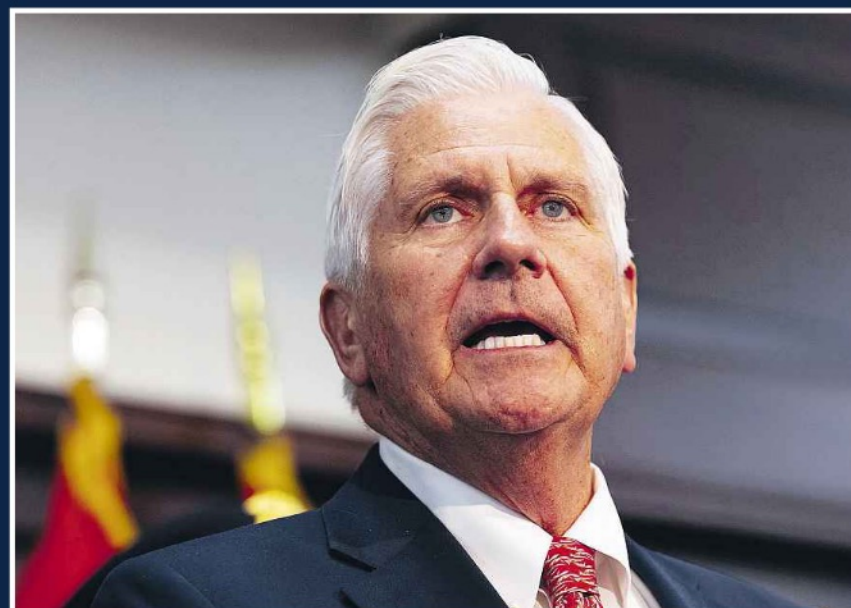
### LI Marching Band To Perform At London Parade

A7 | VIDEO AT NEWSDAY.TV

# ONLY IN NEWSDAY DUPLICATE CONTRIBUTIONS IN BLAKEMAN FILING

The listings  
total more  
than \$460G  
in latest  
campaign  
finance  
report

A5



A campaign watchdog group said the repetitive entries raise questions about the fundraising report for Bruce Blakeman, the Republican nominee for governor.

# DISCOVERING SEA CLIFF: WHAT TO DO, SEE AND EAT

EXPLORE LI

# Ending Haitians' TPS brought disruption

All nine staffers we had to let go were vital to the daily lives of people we serve

BY LISA BURCH  
Guest essay

When nine direct support professionals for those with disabilities suddenly leave an organization like ours, the impact cannot be measured simply by nine vacancies on a staffing schedule.

At EPIC Long Island, we recently had to terminate that many staff members to comply with federal employment eligibility requirements after the end of Haitians' Temporary Protected Status. Five were full-time employees and four part-time. These team members worked in EPIC's residential homes across Long Island, including in Medford, Baldwin, Freeport, Coram, Hicksville, North Patchogue and Farmingdale.

All nine were an integral part of the daily lives of people we serve with intellectual and developmental disabilities, or I/DD. Their average tenure with EPIC was about a year and a half. One had worked with us for 10 years.

That kind of familiarity mat-

ters tremendously in our field.

Direct support professionals, or DSPs, help people with I/DD eat, bathe, prepare for day programs, participate in community activities, and navigate countless other parts of everyday life. Over time, they learn the routines, preferences, behaviors and support needs of the people they serve. Trust develops through that consistency.

When familiar staff disappear, those routines and relationships are disrupted.

We cannot simply leave a shift uncovered. Our residential programs have staffing requirements based on the needs of the people living in each home. When vacancies occur, we may need to bring in employees from other programs or staff who may be less familiar with the people living in that home. That keeps necessary supports in place, but it does not immediately replace what was lost.

A DSP entering a home for the first time does not yet know each person's routines,



A screenshot from the EPIC Family of Human Service Agencies website.

communication style or individual needs. The people we support may find themselves receiving intimate, highly personal assistance from someone they don't know. For individuals who rely on consistency and familiarity, particularly those with significant behavioral or supervision needs, those changes can be profoundly disruptive.

The strain is felt by the DSPs who remain. They may be asked to work overtime while we recruit, hire and train replace-

ments. Long Island providers were already struggling to recruit and retain DSPs amid persistent workforce shortages and a high cost of living. In that context, this new pressure increases the risk of burnout and creates yet another challenge to maintaining stability.

This is what the loss of nine employees looks like within a disability-services organization with roughly 600 employees, 400 of whom are direct support professionals.

It also illustrates how deci-

sions made at the federal level can produce consequences that are intensely local. A change in immigration policy can leave an empty position in a group home in Farmingdale or a supervisor scrambling to cover a shift in Medford. Most importantly, a person with a disability in Baldwin or Freeport may suddenly be left wondering why someone they knew and trusted is no longer there.

At EPIC Long Island, our responsibility is to ensure that people with intellectual and developmental disabilities continue receiving consistent, personal and high-quality support. We will meet that responsibility.

Policymakers at every level must understand what moments like this teach us. Decisions surrounding immigration and the disability workforce do not remain confined to government documents or policy debates.

Eventually, they can arrive at someone's front door.

■ **THIS GUEST ESSAY** reflects the views of Lisa Burch, the president and CEO of EPIC Family of Human Service Agencies.



A detail of a rendering of the proposed NYU Langone Health hospital, which would have about 500 beds on 45 acres in Melville.

group.

I would not want to lose these and other caring services or would want anyone to be unable to use them. If hospitals are required to pay property taxes, these programs could be

at risk.

— PATRICIA DEANGELIS FIFE, MERRICK

The writer is a former director of patient services for the Visiting Nurse Association of Long Island.

Hospitals benefit from, not detract from, the economy, including the tax base. They purchase goods and services, stimulate nearby businesses and support 129,000 jobs. They generated an estimated \$29.4 billion in economic activity and \$4.8 billion in tax dollars for the region in 2025, an increase of 60% over a decade.

More care is being provided in outpatient settings because it's not possible to expand hospital campuses to meet growing patient needs. It's also more efficient to shift care to outpatient settings because advances in treatment and technology have made it safe to do so. Nonhospital providers at the same sites would not have hospitals' obligations to treat all patients or provide the services most needed.

I particularly take issue with the unsupported statement that there is "a lot of evidence"

that charity care spending is insufficient to justify nonprofit status. Providing financial assistance is required by law and is a foundation of hospitals' missions. Hospitals also invest in research, train clinicians, subsidize Medicare and Medicaid underpayments, and sponsor community programs. Their community benefit spending has doubled since 2015.

Hospitals take seriously their obligations to provide cutting-edge care, expand access, and treat the uninsured, while serving as a bedrock of Long Island's economy.

— WENDY DARWELL, HAUPPAUGE

The writer is the president and CEO of the Suburban Hospital Alliance of New York State.

## Power lines belong safely underground

I applaud the state Public Service Commission for conditionally greenlighting the Propel NY Energy project, but some opponents of the project chiefly worry about electromagnetic fields from the project's buried cables ["LI school districts criticize 'conditional' OK of Propel," News, Oct. 1].

Consider that people living in Manhattan get electricity from underground cables. Should they worry, too? Should Con Ed dig up all of its cables as a public health hazard? Underground electric lines are an accepted fact of modern life, until people think a new one will be running under their street.

— KAREN C. HIGGINS, MASSAPEQUA PARK

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