

MEMORANDUM OF SUPPORT

S.8676 (Fahy)/A.10445 (Santabarbara)

An act to amend the private housing finance law, in relation to enacting the
Care Workforce Housing Preference Act

The Arc New York strongly supports S.8676/A.10445, the Care Workforce Housing Preference Act, and urges the Legislature to advance this important measure. This legislation would create a fair, narrowly tailored housing preference for members of the direct care and human services workforce within certain affordable housing developments—a reform that is long overdue and directly responsive to the workforce crisis threatening the disability services system across our State.

New York’s network of community-based providers serving individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities, behavioral health needs, and other complex conditions has faced a severe and worsening workforce shortage for more than a decade. Direct support professionals, certified nursing assistants, behavioral health aides, and related frontline workers are the backbone of the Medicaid-funded service delivery system, yet they are often unable to afford stable housing in the very communities where their services are needed most. The consequences are devastating: chronic staff vacancies, unsustainable turnover rates, disruptions in service continuity, and growing waitlists for individuals with disabilities who depend on these workers to live safely and with dignity in their communities.

Housing affordability is not merely an ancillary concern for the care workforce; it is a primary driver of recruitment and retention failure. When a direct support professional earning \$18 or \$19 per hour cannot find housing within a reasonable commute of their assigned residence or day program, they leave the field. When a Direct Support Professional (DSP) is working the overnight shift in a group home must choose between

rent and reliable transportation, the system loses a trained, experienced caregiver. These are not hypothetical scenarios. They are the daily reality confronting providers and the individuals they serve in every region of the State.

The Care Workforce Housing Preference Act offers a practical response to this crisis. By establishing a preference—administered through lottery weighting or tie-breaking, not set-asides—for qualified care workers in Low-Income Housing Tax Credit developments, bond-financed rental housing, and certain HOME-assisted projects, the bill creates a modest but meaningful pathway for frontline caregivers to access affordable housing near their places of employment. The preference is capped at no more than twenty percent of restricted units, with optional lower thresholds of ten or five percent, and is limited to the first sixty days of each marketing cycle. These design features preserve broad access to affordable housing for all income-eligible New Yorkers while acknowledging the unique role that care workers play in sustaining the State's health and human services infrastructure.

Critically, the bill's definition of eligible occupations encompasses the full spectrum of the care workforce that serves people with disabilities: DSPs, certified nursing assistants, licensed practical nurses, registered nurses, behavioral health and human services staff employed in programs overseen by OPWDD, OMH, and OASAS, and early intervention and special education therapists. This inclusive definition reflects the reality that the workforce crisis is not confined to a single job title or program area; it spans the entire continuum of care. By recognizing this breadth, the legislation ensures that the housing preference reaches the workers whose stability matters most to the individuals and families we represent.

The bill also provides direction to the Division of Housing and Community Renewal to amend the Qualified Allocation Plan to award up to five points for projects that adopt the preference and submit a verified care workforce marketing and outreach plan. The QAP scoring incentive is a powerful signal to developers and project sponsors that the State views care workforce housing as a policy priority. When combined with the marketing and outreach requirements—including named partnerships with provider agencies, multilingual materials, voucher-neutral screening, and close-out reporting—this framework creates meaningful accountability and ensures that the preference is not merely symbolic but is actively implemented in a transparent and equitable manner.

From a fair housing perspective, the preference operates through lottery weighting rather than exclusionary set-asides, preserving the eligibility of all income-qualified

applicants regardless of employment status. It is time-limited, capped, and subject to reporting requirements. These safeguards reflect the legal and policy constraints governing affordable housing programs and demonstrate that workforce housing preferences can be implemented in a manner fully consistent with fair housing principles.

For the disability community, the implications of this legislation extend well beyond housing policy. Stable, affordable housing for direct care workers translates directly into more consistent staffing, reduced turnover, and better outcomes for the individuals who depend on these workers every day. When a member of the Careforce can live in the community that they serve, they are more likely to remain in their position, to develop meaningful relationships with the people they support, and to deliver the kind of person-centered care that our system aspires to provide. The Care Workforce Housing Preference Act recognizes this connection and takes a concrete, fiscally responsible step to strengthen it.

The Arc New York respectfully urges the Senate and Assembly to pass S.8676/A.10445.

For more information, contact Philip Aydinian, Director of Governmental Affairs, philip.aydinian@thearcny.org

About The Arc New York

The Arc New York is a family-led organization that advocates and provides supports and services to people with intellectual, developmental, and other disabilities (IDD), emphasizing choice and community engagement. With 35 Chapters across New York state representing every county, our organization supports more than 60,000 people and families and employs more than 30,000 people statewide.