

# NEW YORK STATE LEGISLATURE

June 25, 2020

Honorable Andrew M. Cuomo, Governor  
State of New York  
Executive Chamber  
State Capitol Albany, New York 12224

Dear Governor Cuomo:

We appreciate this opportunity to contact you directly to urge your immediate reconsideration of your administration's proposed, nearly \$240 million reduction in funding for the state Office of People with Developmental Disabilities (OPWDD), set to take effect on July 1, 2020.

The devastating consequences of this funding cut, if enacted, has been brought to our attention by the non-profit providers of residential services, Care Coordination Organizations (CCOs), Direct Support Professionals (DSPs) and, in particular, the families of persons with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) for whom these residences and services are irreplaceable lifelines.

As you well know, the COVID-19 response has taken an enormous toll on every sector across the local, state and federal spectrum of agencies and organizations. It has and will continue to demand, for the foreseeable future, a constant reassessment and reordering of governmental practices, priorities and responsibilities, and we look forward to continuing to work with you and your administration on these efforts.

In this specific instance, we urge your careful reexamination and immediate reconsideration of what would amount to a cut that would only serve to exacerbate the ongoing COVID-19 crisis by imposing an unreasonable hardship on the already hard-pressed IDD service providers and frontline workers who, by the way, we have called on throughout this emergency to protect one of our most vulnerable populations.

Your proposed funding cut could, in fact, force the closure of some of the very agencies we have absolutely considered essential during this time of great need. We are hopeful that you will agree that their service throughout this pandemic and our state's response to it has been courageous and remarkable, and has at least earned our ongoing state-level commitment to their future sustainability and well-being.

Furthermore and more specifically, your proposed vacancy rate cut, in our view, is ill-timed, unnecessary and stands only to deliver a callous threat, at this worst possible time, to this vulnerable population and their families and loved ones for whom these community-based residences, programs and services are nothing short of irreplaceable. This population has been and will remain especially at-risk during this pandemic. It will likely account for more frequent inpatient hospital stays. Your administration's "empty bed" calculation for determining these proposed funding cuts shows a startling and surprising misunderstanding of how these residential services are provided. Worse, it runs the terrible and unconscionable risk of forcing persons with IDD from their homes and their families and caregivers scrambling to arrange and navigate

services that are already hard to find and adjust to. It places an unfair and unneeded strain on these individuals and their families and caregivers.

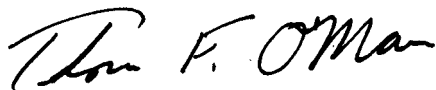
In our opinion, the proposed vacancy rate cut is a callous, out-of-touch, bureaucratic fiscal attack on the very residential services that New York State should be considering and treating as essential moving forward.

In short, there must be a better, more compassionate and more sensible solution, and we strongly urge your administration to rescind this proposed OPWDD funding reduction and remain firmly committed to the protection of this vulnerable population during a time of greatest need.

That would be the New York way and, again, we appreciate your careful consideration.

As always, thank you and please contact us if we can provide additional information or be helpful in any other way.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Tom F. O'Mara" in a cursive style.

*Thomas F. O'Mara*  
58<sup>th</sup> Senate District

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Philip A. Palmesano" in a cursive style.

*Philip A. Palmesano*  
132<sup>nd</sup> Assembly District

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "CSF" in a stylized, cursive-like font.

*Christopher S. Friend*  
124<sup>th</sup> Assembly District

cc: Robert F. Mujica Jr., Director, NYS Division of the Budget