



## Executive Budget & Legislative Priorities

### 2023-24 Executive Budget Proposals

#### **PRIORITIZE: The I/DD Sector's Workforce**

##### **Create the Direct Support Wage Enhancement (DSWE)**

Support a Direct Support Wage Enhancement (DSWE) to enable providers to recruit and retain essential staff in not-for-profit agencies located all across New York State.

**Recommendation:** Implement a permanent DSWE investment to allow providers to offer \$4,000 per eligible employee to enhance the hourly rate of pay for all staff performing direct care/support for people with I/DD. This wage enhancement would be similar to the one offered to DSPs/staff in state-operated settings.

##### **Ensure Funds Support any Minimum Wage Increases**

The Governor's Budget includes a provision to index the state's minimum wage to the rate of inflation, subject to a cap and limited exceptions.

**Recommendation:** The NY Alliance supports increases to the state's minimum wage to ensure that all people receive fair pay for the work being performed. It is essential that all future increases to the state's minimum wage that impact not-for-profit providers include the appropriate levels of funding for these mandated raises.

#### **PRIORITIZE: New York's Not-for-Profit Agencies**

##### **Support the COLA**

Over the past decade, New York's not-for-profit providers of services to people with intellectual and developmental disabilities have consistently called upon New York State to help agencies keep up with the general cost of living. The lack of appropriate levels of funding, coupled with record-high inflation and ongoing soaring increases in essentials (food, fuel, insurance, etc..) is negatively impacting supports and services. The workforce crisis has exacerbated an already fragile system. The fiscal sustainability of New York's not for profit I/DD provider agencies remains paramount.

**Recommendation:** The NY Alliance strongly urges the Senate and Assembly to increase the Governor's proposed Cost of Living Adjustment from 2.5% to 8.5%. The 2.5% COLA for the NYS Office for People With Developmental Disabilities (OPWDD) is an estimated \$74.8 million. The total cost for an 8.5% COLA for OPWDD is \$254.3 million.

#### **PRIORITIZE: The Rights of People with I/DD**

##### **Establish a Statewide Ombudsman Program**

The NY Alliance strongly believes that the role of an Ombudsman is essential in publicly funded systems of supports and services to people with disabilities. Such a program is especially vital when systems are difficult and oftentimes confusing to navigate for people being served.

**Recommendation:** The NY Alliance respectfully requests the Senate and Assembly to accept the Governor's proposal to establish a Statewide Ombudsman Program for people with I/DD as it will assist people to access necessary services, provide education on how to obtain supports and help to resolve issues.



**Establish a Statewide Ombudsman Program (cont'd)**

The Senate and Assembly might consider adding language to the proposal to ensure the Ombudsman program provides information to the public on the number of people with I/DD that sought the assistance of the Ombudsman, track numbers of complaints and grievances received by the Ombudsman's Office, by region, and numbers of service denials by the state and reasons for denials.

## **PRIORITIZE: The Power of Housing Supports & Services**

### **Expanded Independent Housing Opportunities**

The Executive Budget includes funds to expand critical independent housing opportunities for people with I/DD. As we've learned over the span of decades, people with disabilities achieve better, healthier outcomes when they live in housing that best suits their needs and desires.

**Recommendation:** The NY Alliance supports the Governor's proposal to provide \$15 million in Capital Funding for expanded independent housing opportunities. We request the Assembly and Senate to accept the Governor's funding proposal.

### **Create Housing Navigation Services for People with I/DD**

Appropriate housing is necessary for people to live stable, healthy lives. To better assist people identify and maintain housing in the community, housing navigation is an essential service. Legislation was introduced this session (S.3196) that recognizes housing navigation as a service within New York's Home and Community-Based Services waiver for people with I/DD.

**Recommendation:** The NY Alliance supports S.3196 (Mannion) as it will help people with I/DD find appropriate housing in their respective communities that meets their needs and works with people to identify housing goals and objectives for meeting those goals.

## **PRIORITIZE: Scope of Practice Changes**

### **Alleviate Workforce Crisis by Allowing Staff to Perform Certain Duties**

As the I/DD sector continues to undergo a severe workforce shortage, alleviating strict and stringent laws, rules and regulations will help with day-to-day tasks while keeping people healthy and safe. The Governor's budget proposes changes to current law to allow for the performance of certain nursing tasks by unlicensed employees of providers certified by OPWDD in non-certified settings.

**Recommendation:** NY Alliance wholeheartedly believes the best interests of people being served in the I/DD system when different types of qualified professionals are available, accessible and working together. Today's workforce shortage has left many providers without available staff but that doesn't mean that other qualified professionals are not accessible or working together. NY Alliance supports the changes to current statute to allow the duties historically performed by nurses to be carried out by other employees.

### **For more information, contact the NY Alliance:**

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