

The Harvey & Ellen Weisenberg Foundation

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9-8-16

Dear Governor Cuomo:

I am writing to express my support for the hundred and thirty five thousand New Yorkers with developmental disabilities and their families, who rely upon the care of direct service professionals for assistance with the things we take for granted every day.

Specifically, I am requesting that you:

- Enact A.10409/S.7677A when it is sent to you for action, and
- include significant funding for a wage increase for direct service professionals in the budget you present to the Legislature in January.

I know you are aware that caregivers of some of New York's most vulnerable people are among the lowest paid in our workforce. Collectively, they provide vital quality of life services for those who are truly unable to care for themselves due to developmental disabilities, mental health issues, debilitating diseases and other physical limitations.

For very little compensation, direct support professionals perform duties that are daunting, heartbreaking and physically challenging. The low salaries, coupled with years of no increases, have had a devastating impact on job retention in these positions. Many who are employed in this field often find it necessary to work an unsafe amount of overtime and/or take a second or third job in order to survive.

To compound this situation, the job-vacancy rate in this profession is growing by alarming numbers, leaving the existing direct care staff in a precarious situation, and some of our citizens in potentially life-threatening danger.

I believe most New Yorkers agree that we have an obligation to care for vulnerable people and to protect them from harm, especially when that care requires dependence upon others for basic needs. We must now ensure that the workforce closest to these vulnerable individuals is valued and compensated with a living wage.

I look forward to seeing your leadership in rectifying this situation and I thank you for your kind consideration of my comments.

Sincerely,