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#bFair2DirectCare Coalition Urges Governor Cuomo to Sign Bill Studying Crisis in Developmental Disabilities Workforce

Governor Has Until Midnight Saturday to Decide

ALBANY – A statewide coalition of organizations that care for New Yorkers with developmental disabilities today urged Governor Cuomo to sign legislation designed to identify the causes of high vacancy and turnover rates of direct care professionals (DSPs) who work in these not-for-profit agencies.

The legislation, A.10409/S.7677-A, sponsored by Assembly Member Aileen Gunther and Senator Robert Ort, is on Governor Cuomo's desk and must be acted on by midnight Saturday.

"We're confident this study will confirm what we have been saying all along – that our wages are not sufficient to retain our best employees for very long, and that it's the people in our care who pay the price," said **Rhonda Frederick**, President of the **Developmental Disabilities Alliance of Western New York** and a leader of the **#bFair2DirectCare** Coalition.

"We support New Yorkers with autism, serious brain injury, cerebral palsy, Down syndrome and other developmental disabilities on behalf of the state. Government controls our funding. The staffing crisis we're facing can be addressed only if Albany steps up and provides the resources we all need to best care for the people who need us," said **#bFair2DirectCare** Coalition leader **Seth Stein, Executive Director, Alliance of Long Island Agencies**.

The legislation requires the NYS Office for People With Developmental Disabilities (OPWDD) to identify the causes of the high vacancy rates and high turnover rates being experienced by non-profit providers of supports and services for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities, and to identify the resources necessary to maintain a quality workforce and reverse the trend toward increased vacancies and turnover in the direct support professional field.

According to a 2016 Vacancy and Turnover Survey recently provided by the coalition to OPWDD, competition from other employers has increased to the point where coalition agencies currently have a nearly 10 percent vacancy rate and more than a 20 percent turnover rate in these important jobs – a significant increase in both vacancies and turnover in just the last year.

As the **#bFair2DirectCare** Coalition has demonstrated over the last several months, providers of supports and services for New Yorkers with developmental disabilities face a perfect storm of inadequate funding, new laws and policies that threaten community integration, the level of support and the civil rights that people with disabilities have achieved, advocates said today.

Organizations that support individuals with developmental disabilities have seen only one rate increase since the recession of 2008, an average increase of less than one-half of one percent per year. Now they face as much as a 67 percent increase in the mandated minimum wage, new federal overtime rules and growing competition from other employers.

More than 90 percent of the funding that sustains these organizations comes from government, and 80 percent of that goes directly to wages for staff who care for New Yorkers with autism, serious brain injury, cerebral palsy, Down syndrome and other developmental disabilities.

The only way that these organizations can raise wages for direct support professionals, teacher aides, drivers, cooks and others making minimum wage, or a little bit more, is for government to increase the rates they provide for the delivery of these critical services to New York's most vulnerable citizens.

This summer, the **#bFair2DirectCare** Coalition launched its ***"300 Days to Better Pay"*** Campaign, which calls on the Governor and State Legislature to address this critical funding issue in the next state budget to avoid a crisis. The Coalition includes organizations from every part of New York State that support New Yorkers with developmental disabilities.

#bFair2DirectCare statewide sponsors include

- Alliance of Long Island Agencies (ALIA)
- Cerebral Palsy Associations of New York State (CP of NYS)
- The Developmental Disability Alliance of Western New York (DDAWNY)
- The InterAgency Council of Developmental Disabilities Agencies (IAC)
- The NYS Association of Community and Residential Agencies (NYSACRA)
- NYSARC Inc.
- New York State Rehabilitation Association (NYSRA)