

New post on Capitol Confidential

Direct care group decries 'bupkis' budget allocation

by [Rick Karlin, Capitol bureau](#)

A group pushing for higher pay among direct care workers who look after disabled New Yorkers is expressing disappointment with Gov. Andrew Cuomo's proposed budget. They have been pushing for money to keep direct care workers above New York's **increasing** minimum wage but they view the budget as basically ensuring that direct care funded workers who aren't yet at the minimum wage are moved to that level, along with the rest of the workforce.

Advocates say that, for the same pay, lots of direct care workers will likely flee to less-demanding jobs such as in fast food restaurants. They were looking for an allocation of \$45 million which hasn't materialized.

While the governor in his budget presentation said there was money for direct care, lobbyists and other note that it is to allow those workers at minimum wage to keep pace with the mandated increase.

Here is what bFair 2 Direct Care is saying:

"#bFair2DirectCare could not have been clearer in what's needed in this year's budget to help direct care workers achieve a living wage – the very kind of economic justice Governor Cuomo has championed for other working New Yorkers – \$45 million.

"What Governor Cuomo proposed can be simply described as 'bupkis.' It's an old Yiddish phrase gently translated as 'nothing.'

"In a budget where he called \$163 million for his college tuition program 'a rounding error,' it's baffling that he could not offer a fraction of that to help non-profits take a first step toward providing a living wage for people whose job it is to bathe, feed, dress, medicate and serve people with Down syndrome, cerebral palsy, autism, brain injury and other developmental disabilities.

"If \$163 million is a rounding error, as the Governor stated last night, then what's less than a third of that? Barely even a typo in a \$150 billion-plus budget.

"Governor Cuomo fails to recognize that non-profits provide this service on the state's behalf and for less than the state can provide the same services. Yet he endorses and perpetuates a state funding scheme that leaves non-profit providers no leeway in paying workers a salary that provides for their families, which is why many direct care workers must work second or third jobs or are tempted to leave the field for better paying jobs in fast food and big box stores. In addition, he even proposes to eliminate the statutory cost of living adjustment.

"Many direct care workers work full time and still qualify for food stamps. That's justice?

"The time is now for Governor Cuomo to widen his 'middle class' focus to support these New Yorkers who support others.

"Yesterday, direct care workers and the good people they support stood outside the Governor's Mansion in freezing temperatures while he briefed legislators on the budget. Governor Cuomo still has a chance to become their hero, instead of leaving them out in the cold.

[Rick Karlin, Capitol bureau](#) | January 18, 2017 at 1:23 pm | URL: <http://blog.timesunion.com/capitol/?p=271325>