

Support wage increase for those who are caregivers

Our adult son is developmentally disabled. He lives in a nearby group home with five other guys. It's a wonderful place, a comfort to us as we age. Andrew is surrounded by caring, skilled staff (direct support professionals or DSPs) who help him to live up to his potential, stay healthy, happy and safe.

Here's the problem: DSPs in New York State have had only a negligible increase in wages in eight years. They can often earn more money working in fast food restaurants or big box stores than they can earn providing care for people with disabilities. Staff turnover, once negligible, has increased. Where there was stability, now there is change, making it difficult for those with developmental disabilities to cope. How do you explain the absence of a staff member who was an important part of someone's daily life?

After 1975, with the closing of Willowbrook, New York made a commitment to provide quality care to those in our population who cannot care for themselves. We call on Gov. Andrew Cuomo to honor that commitment by providing funding for pay increases to DSPs. The result will be stabilized and improved services for the most vulnerable in our population. It will encourage new workers to become qualified DSPs. It will acknowledge the importance of the work done by these dedicated professionals. Gov. Andrew Cuomo, we call on you to do the right thing for a population that cannot advocate for itself.

Julia Kessler
Michael Kessler
Pleasant Valley

Support living wage for direct support professionals

As the parent of a son with a disability, I am writing as a supporter of the #bFair2DirectCare Coalition's "300 Days to Better Pay" campaign.

When I learned that my son had a disability, I was able to find support for him right in the community. That support is in jeopardy because of the lack of direct care staff. Many are leaving these challenging positions to find jobs in fast food restaurants and big box stores that suddenly pay more.

Flat state government funding and new wage and benefit mandates have created this growing worker shortage. We are now facing a crisis that will only get worse. Some agencies have vacancy rates exceeding 20 percent.

New York state needs to back up its mandates by funding a living wage for direct support professional (DSP) workers salaries.

Please help support fair pay for direct support professionals and other vital staff that help support thousands of New Yorkers by calling and writing your State legislators and Gov. Andrew Cuomo. Tell them you support the "300 Days to Fair Pay" campaign calling on New York State to provide fair pay for

DSP's working in every community across the state.

Please follow and like us on Facebook (@bFair2DirectCare) and Twitter (#bFair2DirectCare).

Thank you for your support of our family and for families across New York.

Kathy Bartles
Pine Plains