

NYDA Elected Official Call Script

Background and Directions:

Over the next two weeks, we need provider agencies to directly engage with their local elected officials within the coming week to express their concerns regarding the Senate and Assembly's individual One-House budget proposals, particularly concerning the provisions added to Cost-of-Living-Adjustment (COLA) and the lack of inclusion of the Direct Support Wage Enhancement (DSWE) in the Assembly's One-House Budget.

Regarding the COLA, our primary concern revolves around the new provision added by both the Senate and Assembly limits the use of funds exclusively to wage increases for non-executive direct care, direct support professionals, and non-executive clinical staff. This restriction significantly diminishes our ability to utilize the COLA for any other essential operational costs.

To address this issue, we are asking you to reach out directly to your Senate and Assembly members. If you have a personal connection with any Senate or Assembly member and can reach them directly on their cell phone, please do so.

Otherwise, we advise you to contact the members' Albany offices from Monday to Wednesday, requesting to speak directly with the member. If they are unavailable, ask to be added to their "call list". If you are calling on a Thursday or Friday, please direct your calls to their district offices.

Talking Points:

Senate:

Appreciation for Direct Support Wage Enhancement:

- Start with a thank you for the Senate's decision to include the Direct Support Wage Enhancement in its budget, highlighting the positive impact of investing an additional \$4,000 in each direct care staff member. This effectively raises their pay by \$2 an hour on average, benefiting our dedicated staff while still managing rising operating costs.

Concerns Over COLA Restrictions:

- Express concern over the new legislative language that limits how the COLA can be used, pointing out that it overlooks the broader range of staff and escalating expenses agencies face that are necessary to provide supports and services.

The Broad Impact of COLA:

- Emphasize that COLA funds are essential for maintaining quality services for people with disabilities, including nutritious food, proper facilities, and housing. Highlight how inflation has significantly increased costs in all areas of disability services, such as transportation, administration, maintenance, insurance, and other operating expenses, outpacing the state's financial support for these services.

Call to Action:

- Urge them to raise concerns with their Leadership and with Central staff and ask that they remove the restrictive language around COLA and ensure that the Direct Support Wage Enhancement is included in the final budget agreement, stressing that failing to do so will negatively affect nonprofit providers, their employees, and most importantly, the individuals with disabilities they serve.

Assembly:**Concern Over Exclusion of Direct Support Wage Enhancement:**

- Start by expressing concern that the Assembly's One-House budget failed to include the Direct Support Wage Enhancement. Highlight the importance of this funding in recognizing and adequately compensating the dedicated staff who provide direct care and support to individuals with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (I/DD).

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Call to Action:

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