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Advocates for New Yorkers with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities Rally for #3for5 at State Capitol

New York Disability Advocates, State Lawmakers, Self-Advocates and Families Sound the Alarm that Vital Services for New Yorkers with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities are in Jeopardy and Call for a 3% Annual Investment for Five Years

Albany, NY – Disability advocates, elected officials and directly impacted New Yorkers rallied at the State Capitol today to urge state lawmakers to protect critical services for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD) by including a 3% annual funding increase for five years in the state budget.

More than 60 advocates, self-advocates and family members, as well as lawmakers Senator David Carlucci and Assembly members Aileen Gunther and Angelo Santabarbara gathered on the steps of the Million Dollar Staircase chanting “3for5” and calling on the State to invest in the organizations that allow New Yorkers with I/DD to live integrated, productive lives.

Hundreds of organizations across the state provide lifelong, comprehensive, individualized services to support people with developmental disabilities in all areas of their lives. In addition to delivering physical and behavioral health services, they assist with transportation, housing, medication administration, cooking, feeding, and developing personal care, community living, employment, and money management skills.

These services are in serious jeopardy due to a decade of stagnant funding that produced just one cost of living increase of 0.02% for non-profit providers.

New York State is mandated to provide services to individuals with I/DD and relies on the voluntary provider sector to deliver them. Yet, while state-run programs have received an annually cost of living increase for the last seven years, non-providers have experienced \$2.6 billion in cuts.

According to a survey released by New York Disability Advocates, nearly half of the organizations providing services have only 40 days of cash on hand. Over the past three years, one out of every three providers has reduced services or cut a program completely due to fiscal constraints.

A 3% annual increased investment for the next five years is crucial to ensure continuity of care for New Yorkers with I/DD.

“We haven’t had a cost of living increase for 10 years,” said Kirk Lewis, Executive Director, Schenectady ARC. “We have fought for money. We have begged for pennies. We’re trying to pay our staff everything we can. We’re trying to provide the benefits. We have to keep the lights on. We have to pay the insurance. We are an important part of our communities, and we are being strangled.”

“3for5 is about us, about the direct support. Without the direct support, we wouldn’t be able to be contributing members of the community. With 3for5, we can thrive,” said BJ Stasio, self-advocate and board member, the Self-Advocacy Association of New York State.

“We’ve been calling for an increase for years. It’s time that we do it,” said Assembly member Aileen Gunther. “We are taking care of the most vulnerable population. This is not just increases—it’s economic development. We create jobs. We create housing. The governor needs to invest in this community.”

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About New York Disability Advocates

New York Disability Advocates (NYDA) is a statewide coalition of seven non-profit provider associations encompassing more than 300 non-profits agencies providing vital services and support to more than 140,000 New Yorkers with intellectual and developmental disabilities.