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[Your Personalized Greeting]

Thank you for being so supportive of the asks your DDAWNY community has advocated for in the OPWDD budget this past month. As you head into finalizing your one-house budget, we wanted to make sure you had the most up-to-date information. I hope that when discussions start on the final one-house budget from your house that you will ensure these 2 key priorities are in there. We appreciate your support of the hundreds of families, workers, and providers in your community and stand ready to fight side by side with you to make sure our voices are heard.

8.5% COLA for SFY 2024

Following a decade of provider agencies not receiving the statutorily required Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA), the inclusion of the 5.4% COLA in SFY 2023 was a crucial investment in our field. However, due to inflation and the rising costs of basically everything the current cost of living is now 8.5 percent. That is why we are asking the legislature to include an 8.5 percent COLA for all non-profits in the OMH, OPWDD, OASAS, OCFS, and OTDA world. These funds will not only be used to maintain DSP salaries in our fields (which is extremely low compared to other workers doing similar jobs) but will allow us to meet our transportation needs, food needs, and operating needs to ensure that those we serve can continue to live with the dignity they are entitled to. The cost of increasing the COLA beyond the 2.5 included in the Governor's budget would only be an additional 350 million in the state budget.

[Click Here for Cost Breakdown](#)

PROVIDE DIRECT SUPPORT PROFESSIONALS WITH AN ANNUAL WAGE ENHANCEMENT

Our workers are living below the poverty line while state workers doing similar jobs have received not one but 2 wage increases in the past year. In fact, this past month they received the \$4,000 wage enhancement we have been asking the executive to give to our workers. While we celebrate the investment in our state workforce, we find it hard to wrap our heads around not investing in these same workers who work in our non-profits, do the same work, and take care of 85 percent of the ID/DD community. We implore you for your help or we fear that we will lose our DSPs at a faster rate and be left with no help for our most vulnerable populations.

That is why DDAWNY is recommending the establishment of a new Direct Support Wage Enhancement (DSWE) as part of the SFY 2024 New York State budget. Through the proposed DSWE, provider agencies would receive an annual funding allocation of \$4,000 per eligible employee to be used for the purpose of enhancing the hourly rate of pay for all staff that have direct care/support responsibilities for individuals with I/DD. This will provide agencies with the ability to increase the hourly pay by approximately \$2.19/hour annually for eligible staff presuming each staff member receives the same increase. Funding must be utilized by provider agencies to enhance the rate of pay for direct support employees.

This proposal is enshrined in S4127 carried by Senator Mannion. A companion bill is expected to be introduced in the Assembly by Assemblywoman Seawright

Costs:

Since these costs would be heavily subsidized by the federal government a wage enhancement for our DSPs would only require a \$125M investment from the state. To be clear that is a \$125M investment to ensure 100,000 workers can rise out of poverty.

[Your personalized closing.]