

## Supplemental Talking Points when Meeting with State Representatives

### **STOP THE CUTS. RAISE THE WAGE.**

### **FUND THE FUTURE!**

#### **Stop the cuts**

- Residential and therapeutic leave cuts (“5/1 cuts”) undermine any investments made in the FY 2021-22 budget
- COVID-19 has devastated providers with unexpected costs and vastly impacted their ability to retain and attract staff
- NYS finances and the influx of federal dollars make cuts unnecessary at this time

#### **Fund a living wage**

- These are not minimum wage jobs, but in many cases, they pay at or just above minimum wage
- We need to recognize the skills required for these jobs
- Support a federal job classification/designation for the field to open the door for targeted actions to support the field

#### **Invest in the future**

- The field has not been supported with adequate investment to help keep up with ever-increasing costs.
- More than a decade of systemic underfunding has destabilized our system of essential supports and services for New Yorkers with I/DD
- We need regular investments to ensure that provider agencies are not constantly faced with being underfunded and at risk of crisis.
- We require consistent investments to retain our talented and dedicated staff, while attracting new people committed to investing in the lives of the people we support.

## **Educate Your Representative About HCBS**

Home and community based services (HCBS) provide opportunities for New Yorkers with I/DD to receive services in their own home or community rather than institutions or other isolated settings. These services include day habilitation services, residential, respite care, service coordination, and adaptive technologies. Costs are shared between states and the federal government, with NYS receiving close to the minimum federal match of 50%. The NYS Office for People with Developmental Disabilities (OPWDD) administers this HCBS waiver program, which is the primary funding mechanism for supporting individuals in the community. HCBS provide a variety of services and supports uniquely tailored and individualized to meet each person's needs and goals. Over 80% of these services are provided by voluntary non-profits like The Arc New York.

## **Education and groundwork for budget asks for state legislators:**

- Voluntary providers of supports and services for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD) are facing a critical workforce shortage, which needs immediate action
- We will follow up with specific funding requests soon as the Executive Budget starts coming together (September would be the earliest we have specific dollar amounts)
- The request will be multi-year. We anticipate it will require ongoing investment in the field to redress the inequities of the past.
- The goals will be three-fold:
  - Bring voluntary providers' wages at least in line with state-operated salaries
  - Commitment to a plan that will result in raising the field to a living wage, as we had proposed under previous campaigns
  - ANY funding must be real – new dollars – and not just moving money from other parts of the OPWDD budget.

## **Workforce Data**

Here are a few sobering state-wide statistics from the most recent New York Disability Advocates (NYDA) Provider Survey to highlight this dire workforce emergency.

- The statewide vacancy rate for DSPs escalated by 74% over the past two years
- 25% of DSP positions are currently vacant across the state
- 93% of providers saw a reduction in job applicants in the first quarter of 2021
- 40% of providers were unable to open programs due to staffing shortages
- 48% of providers were forced to close programs or reduce operations during Q1 2021 because they lacked the staff to sustain them
- Most recently, senior and administrative staff at 69% of providers were pulled from their leadership responsibilities to cover direct support shifts