

September 21, 2020

Dear Family Member and/or Guardian:

I hope this correspondence finds you well during these challenging times. I wanted to follow up on a letter that I recently shared regarding impending funding cuts that will impact the services and supports we provide in our residential program.

The Arc New York is embarking on a campaign to build support against the rate cuts scheduled to begin on October 1, 2020. Below is a General Link that can be typed into a web browser that will send a letter directly to our local legislators. I have also provided a Social Media Link that can be shared on your social media platform(s) (i.e. Facebook, Twitter, etc.)

- General Link: <https://p2a.co/bABMXzE>
- Social Media Link: <https://p2a.co/gotSDnp>

*Both links direct the user to the same location. **However**, please use the dedicated Social Media Link when you share on that platform as it helps to track the number of each method.*

Since legislators are away from their offices and the capitol, your letters and contact will help to ensure that legislators know your opinion and hear your voice. These cuts circumvent the budget process, so although they might be somewhat aware, it is our responsibility to convey the impact and tell it like it is. Please be sure to share this far and wide – The Arc NY’s goal is to hit at least 10,000 points of contact.

Below is the text of the letter that will be sent from the website after you enter in your Name, Address, Zip Code, Phone and Email. In the letter below, once you enter your information the brackets will be automatically populated with your information.

Dear [insert legislator name]

My name is [@advFirst] [@advLast] and I am a constituent and supporter of New Yorkers with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD). They are our family, friends, loved ones, and members of our community.

I am writing in extreme opposition to administrative cuts handed down from DOH and OPWDD that could jeopardize the residential stability of our friends and loved ones. The most egregious cut, planned to go into effect on October 1, 2020, would reduce payments to voluntary providers by 50% whenever individuals with I/DD leave to spend time with family or are admitted to the hospital for care. This is completely unconscionable. It punishes families for staying connected and involved with their loved ones with disabilities, and threatens to erode the fiscal stability of our

residential support system. It also completely circumvents the legislative budget process, even during this difficult year, which is why I am writing to inform you and ask for your help with pushing back.

The “beds” those with I/DD occupy are not temporary placements, like a hospital or a rehabilitation center. These are the homes of people that they may come and go from in times of crisis or for connection - homes they have a right to return to. This cut would jeopardize that basic security. Just as our own fixed expenses do not go away when we are on vacation or in the hospital, the costs to a provider do not vanish when an individual they support is away from home.

Imagine being a family member who is burdened with the knowledge that spending time with their loved one could cause financial harm and instability to the place they call home. Families should be encouraged and supported in staying connected with their loved ones throughout their life. There should not be a financial penalty for spending time with your family, and families should not be discouraged from such visitation.

Providers have tried their hardest not to burden families with issues like this, but the reality is that New York state is has been intentionally underfunding our system of supports and services for years. Basic human decency would dictate that this is unacceptable in any form. New York has a constitutional obligation to care for its most vulnerable citizens. I am calling on you to honor and uphold the oath you took when you became my state representative. Our family members are not just numbers on a spreadsheet, their homes should be protected, safe, and available for them without question.

This is only one of several cuts that have come to my attention, but this one hits me personally. I will follow up with your office shortly to schedule an online meeting where we can discuss this and other issues. I appreciate your time and please feel free to contact me in the meantime prior to our meeting.

Sincerely,
[@advFirst] [@advLast]

Thank you for your advocacy in this time of uncertainty. It is with your assistance that we can make a difference for people with disabilities.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Matt Mehlenbacher". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal flourish at the end.

Matt Mehlenbacher, Chief Operations Officer