

The Honorable Andrew M. Cuomo
Governor of New York State
NYS State Capitol Building
Albany, NY 12224

Dear Governor Cuomo:

Across the state, more than 125,000 people with developmental disabilities depend on the care of direct support professionals to live, work, and learn as part of their communities. These nonprofit professionals perform challenging and intimate job responsibilities in support of their fellow New Yorkers with highly intensive needs. ***Today I write to ask you to support the #bFair2DirectCare coalition's "300 Days to Better Pay" campaign calling for increased state funding to provide a living wage to this dedicated and vital workforce.***

Nonprofit providers who make up the #bFair2DirectCare coalition rely on government support for 90 percent of the funding of these services, 80 percent of which goes directly to staff wages. Direct care staff are entrusted by the state to support New Yorkers who have autism, serious brain injury, cerebral palsy, Down syndrome and other intellectual and developmental disabilities in our communities and deserve a fair rate of pay for the vital care they provide.

After eight years without a significant adjustment in wages and recent increases in the minimum wage, direct care workers are leaving for other jobs at an alarming rate. Nearly 10 percent of the direct care jobs in the state now are vacant and turnover is 23 percent annually.

Without competitive wages and the corresponding state rate increase, we face a staffing crisis that threatens all we have done to let New Yorker's with intellectual and developmental disabilities leave state institutions and live in our communities.

Governor Cuomo, we need your help. It's time for New York State to recognize the skills and knowledge of staff that support people with developmental disabilities with wages that reflect the complexity of their work. It's time to say a fair day's work equals a fair day's pay.

That's why I support the #bFair2DirectCare Coalition's "300 Days to Better Pay" campaign. I call on you to please support my community, our neighbors, and the "300 Days to Better Pay" campaign and include funding for wage increases for the people that support people with developmental disabilities in your next state budget.

Thank you.

Sincerely,