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CIDNY's Testimony on FY 24-25 Health Budget Hearing

Center for the Independence of the Disabled, NY (CIDNY) is the voice of people with disability in New York City. We are a nonprofit organization founded in 1978. We are part of the Independent Living Centers movement, a national network of grassroots and community-based organizations that enhance opportunities for people with disabilities to direct their own lives. We hereby testify our support for the bills and legislations below.

CIDNY supports "The Ounce of Prevention Act." (A6027 Paulin/S1366 Rivera)

This would prevent medical debt by making hospital financial assistance more accessible and ensuring money allocated for charity care is used for that purpose.

CIDNY Supports Fair Pay 4 Home Care - S.3189 (2023-2024)

There has long been a homecare worker shortage in parts of New York State, making it difficult for people to obtain home care, which has worsened to the point of crisis throughout the State. The home care crisis has surpassed the lack of accessible affordable housing as the primary barrier to transitioning people out of nursing facilities back into the community, which is the work of CIDNY's Open Doors program. The State has an obligation under the Supreme Court decision, *Olmstead v. L.C.*, to provide people with support and services in the community, yet the lack of available home care is forcing people who want to leave, to remain in institutions.

We acknowledge and appreciate the three-dollar increase included in the previous Budget but know that it will not adequately address the ongoing home care crisis.

Full [Fair Pay for Home Care](#) would raise wages for home care workers and consumer-directed personal assistants to \$22.50/hr., or 150% of the highest minimum wage in each region, equivalent to what homecare workers earned in 2006, before the failure to keep up with rising wages in other sectors. It would also establish regional minimum hourly reimbursement to providers that allow them to pay these wages without going out of business.

CIDNY supports increased funding for Community Health Advocates (CHA), the State's health care consumer assistance program, at \$5.234 million.



Since 2010, CHA has helped New Yorkers, including many people with disabilities, navigate their health insurance plans to get what they need, and has saved New Yorkers over \$100 million. People with serious illnesses and disabilities especially need this assistance so that they can get appropriate services and support. CHA's contact information now appears on Medicaid notices, which means more patients will use the program. Additionally, with the end of the public health emergency rules, many people will be transitioning between health insurance and experience gaps in coverage that will require urgent resolution. CHA's funding should be maintained at \$5.234 million.

CIDNY supports increased state share funding for the Long-term Care Ombudsprogram to \$15 million.

The Long-Term Care Ombudsprogram (LTCOP) serves as an advocate and resource for people living in nursing facilities and other institutions. The program is intended to promote and protect patients' rights as well as their health and safety by receiving, investigating, and resolving complaints made by or on behalf of residents. During the pandemic thousands of nursing facility residents died, and they continue to die due to the virus and lack of care. The program has been dealing with visitation issues, inappropriate discharges, psychotropic drugging and other serious problems with only minimal resources.

The LTCOP receives federal funding, but it is insufficient to provide adequate services in New York State. New York's match is one of the lowest in the nation, leaving providers overly reliant on volunteers. The State Comptroller released a report which found that many residents in long term care facilities lack representation from an Ombudsman due to lack of volunteers and paid staff. The report found that statewide, there are about half the recommended number of full-time staff. It found that in New York City alone, 23 more full-time staff would be required. *The legislature should increase State share funding of the Long-term Care Ombudsprogram to \$15 million.*

CIDNY supports establishing a statewide emergency and crisis response council "Daniel's Law" (A2210 Bronson/S2398 Brouk)

An act to amend the mental hygiene law, in relation to establishing the statewide emergency and crisis response council, to plan and provide support regarding the operation and financing of high-quality emergency and crisis response services for persons experiencing a mental health, alcohol use, or substance use crisis.

CIDNY supports S7800/A8470 which relates to long term care options for Medicaid recipients.

This bill repeals managed long term care provisions for Medicaid recipients; and establishes provisions for fully integrated plans for long term care including PACE and MAP plans.



CIDNY supports Stop SUNY Suing bill S7778/A8170

This bill prohibits state-operated hospitals from suing patients for medical debt; and defines 'medical debt.'

CIDNY supports S2503/A4926 which creates New York Funded Statewide Deafblind Co-Navigator Program

This bill establishes a co-navigation services program for persons who are deaf-blind to provide services that assist the person to physically access the person's environment and to make informed decisions, including providing visual and environmental information or sighted guide services and assisting with communication accessibility by communicating in the preferred language and communication mode of the person who is deaf-blind.

CIDNY supports S504/A414:

This bill reduces the cap on cost sharing for insulin from the current \$100 per insulin prescription per month to \$30 per month, in aggregate, for all insulin drugs.

CIDNY also supports the programs of Mental Health Association in NYS:

Human services workforce funding in 2024

History of the human services cost of living adjustment (COLA) in NY.

MHANYS behavioral health career pipeline proposal

Behavioral health parity

Non-profit pension study bill drafted by MHANYS

Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) information

MHANYS mental health and higher education proposal

MHANYS mental health and higher education draft legislation

Leave of absence policy guidance for higher education.

Thank you,

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