

Dear Governor Cuomo and Commissioner Kastner:

My name is [Insert Name] and I am a constituent and [parent/family member/caregiver/supporter] of a New Yorker with an intellectual and developmental disability.

**I am writing in extreme opposition to cuts in reimbursement for IRA and ICF residential programs as published in the State Register.**

These cuts would eliminate the occupancy adjustment resulting from vacancies and slash reimbursement in half for days when our brothers, sisters, sons, and daughters must go to the hospital, receive therapy, or visit family.

Ostensibly, this is being done to save taxpayers from paying for “empty beds,” which implies services are not being delivered. But these are not empty beds, they are the homes that our loved ones return to, and this cut would jeopardize that simple security.

**Just as our own basic expenses don't disappear when we are away or in the hospital, the cost to a provider for caring for my loved one doesn't simply vanish when they are away from home.**

The costs for direct care staffing - 80% of which is the salary paid to direct care staff, clinical staff and residence supervisors - are fixed and can't be reduced simply because my loved one is out of the house. **Staff provide care around the clock for everyone in a home, and if one person is in the hospital, providers can't just place a staff member on unpaid leave until the hospital stay is over.**

**Voluntary providers like JAWONIO** have been cut to the bone after years of underfunding by the state. This cut will no doubt cause a decrease in the number of residential openings in the state at a time when there is a waiting list in the thousands for these coveted spots.

**New York has a constitutional obligation to care for its most vulnerable citizens.** It is a promise this state has made to my loved one, and to every New Yorker with I/DD. Where you see wastefulness in paying for empty beds, we see the state's proposed cuts as the delivery of an empty promise.

This empty promise would:

- Take about \$200 million every year from our loved ones with I/DD.
- Reduce reimbursement by as much as 7.5% for certain residential programs with significant vacancies, including vacancies due to deaths from COVID-19.
- Disproportionately harm individuals with serious medical or psychiatric conditions.
- Drastically cut funding to providers in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, after providers were seemingly abandoned to the point of having to purchase their own personal protective equipment.

Don't make empty promises.

**Allow our family members to have the dignity and stability of returning to the same friends, staff, comforts, and level of service they left. Rethink your proposed cuts to the vacancy rates and find savings elsewhere.**

Sincerely,

[Insert Name]

## Where to send your letter

### **OPWDD Commissioner Dr. Theodore Kastner**

Written comments on the proposed cuts will be accepted from June 1, 2020 through July 1, 2020 and may be submitted by mail to:

OPWDD, Division of Policy and Program Development  
44 Holland Ave  
Albany, NY 12229

or by e-mail to: [peoplefirstwaiver@opwdd.ny.gov](mailto:peoplefirstwaiver@opwdd.ny.gov).

### **Gov. Andrew Cuomo**

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

YOU CAN ALSO CALL AND LEAVE A MESSAGE WITH STAFF [1-518-474-8390](tel:1-518-474-8390)

OR,

Submit a message online at <https://www.governor.ny.gov/content/governor-contact-form>