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**Ronny Reader**

CEO, Company Name  
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Dear

This correspondence is concerning the upcoming New York State Executive Budget plan that has been proposed for the 2021 - 2022 Fiscal year. Specifically, the major cuts towards funding for people with disabilities that would happen if this budget were to pass.

My name is Colby Van Voorhis and I am one of eight adopted children. Myself and members of my family have various intellectual and developmental disabilities. It is a great concern to all citizens with a disability that reside in the state of New York should these cuts that are being proposed actually happen. In this Executive Budget, which will be effective July 1, 2021, a 5% budget cut will be imposed on the Office for People with Developmental Disabilities for 2021. This is in addition to the 20% withholding of state dollars and cuts to reimbursement for Residential Services that has happened over the past few months. It is frightening that this proposed cut is being done as an "administrative action", which makes it hidden from the public in the NYS budget documentation. This is an exemplification of zero transparency in the Governor's Executive budget. Due to this proposed budget plan, the Office for People with Developmental Disabilities (OPWDD) has announced that there will be a second round of significant budgetary cuts for the seven Care Coordination Organization/Health Homes (CCO/HHs), which were created in 2018 to assist individuals with Intellectual and/or Developmental Disabilities (I/DD). These CCO/HHs provide person-centered and integrated care so people with I/DD may live a quality life. A total of 110,000 individuals with I/DD and their families rely on the CCO/HHs to ensure equitable access to quality health care and long-term support services. Many of these individuals are unable to advocate for themselves or do not have family to assist. This new 23% cut is in addition to the 16.2% CCO/HH cut that went into effect July of last year. If this funding cut is approved, a total of 166 million dollars (39%), would be taken from the CCO/HH budgets within just the past 12 months! This is separate from the \$238 million in annualized cuts to residential rates that just happened this past October. These cuts resulted in the loss of 1,200 beds in group homes and other residential facilities. The impact of these new proposed cuts is startling and would leave individuals with I/DD at high risk.

New York Disability Advocates estimate that organizations supporting people with intellectual and developmental disabilities have lost \$2.6 billion over the past 10 years due to Medicaid funding cuts. New York State Assemblymember Thomas Abinanti of Westchester County was recently quoted saying "We have gone from benign neglect to active abandonment and, in some cases, actual attacks because of the cuts that have been forced upon us by the

governor," and sadly, he is absolutely correct with that statement. In this budget, NYS Medicaid populations (excluding people with I/DD) will continue to have fully funded budgets for the coordination of their healthcare and other needs. It is obviously discriminating against people with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities. This is truly unacceptable and is a catastrophic portrayal of abuse of human rights. These budget cuts have raised fears throughout the I/DD community of a return to the era of the Willowbrook State School in Staten Island, which operated from 1947-1987. Where dismal conditions led to widespread abuse, neglect, disease and inhumane medical experimentation.

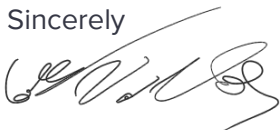
Now, everything that I have said could be attributed to the Covid-19 pandemic, that it is taking a toll on everyone. At this moment in time, that would be understandable if this were a one time event, but it is not! It is something that reoccurs year in and year out to the point where you are asking yourself "What are they going to cut now?". The Covid-19 pandemic is another example of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities being overlooked. Organizations and agencies that support people with I/DD have been hit drastically. Not-for-profit agencies were left on their own to find and provide PPE (so far without reimbursement). These agencies had to provide hazard pay for staff who were putting their own lives at risk while caring for residents during the worst of the pandemic. To date, New York State has received well over \$64B for Covid related expenses, with none of it going to agencies that care for people with I/DD.

Considering all of these points that I have stated in this letter, I am asking that you listen to and advocate for your constituents because it is time that we "normalize" people with disabilities and stop overlooking them and seeing them as individuals who do not have a voice. I urgently request you to stand with the I/DD community and vote **against** the Governor's proposed cuts. Attached is a picture of myself and my family, to show you these proposed cuts are not just taking away from agencies and organizations, it's taking essential services away from people, human beings. Leaving people with intellectual and developmental disabilities at a major disadvantage. If these cuts were made to any other underrepresented group, there would be general outrage. With many of our state representatives advocating on their behalf. So my question to you is, "Where is our representation?"

Thank you for your time regarding this matter and I look forward to hearing back from you with ideas on how we can do better.

**"Make us a priority for once"**

Sincerely



Colby Van Voorhis