

PRESS RELEASE – FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**“WHO WILL TAKE CARE OF MY LOVED ONE WHEN I CAN’T...”**  
***Families from Across the State hold Vigil at Capitol***

In the reception area of Governor Paterson’s Office in the State Capitol, family members and people with developmental disabilities from around the state will hold a vigil today in an effort to meet with the Governor to personally tell him of the devastating effect that his proposed budget cuts will have on them and the tens of thousands of other families and individuals they represent. The vigil is expected to last for several days as the Governor and Legislature consider proposed budget cuts.

“I am terrified at the prospect of a 10% cut in OMRDD funding” states Margaret Puddington, the mother of a son who has significant disabilities. “A cut that deep will draw blood: staff will be laid off, programs will be overcrowded, supervision and oversight will vanish. My son will no longer get the care he requires. We families will do anything to avoid the wreckage that a 10% cut would produce. We believe it is unconscionable—and unforgivable—to compromise the well-being of our beloved children by imposing the same level of cut on OMRDD’s services that are essential to survival, as on other, nonessential state services that are basically administrative.”

Over the past couple of years New York State’s developmental disabilities services system has been significantly scaled back. Last year the system took an \$87 million cut. This year another 10% cut is proposed. This would lead to the elimination of vital programs and services and an estimated workforce reduction of more than 10,000 employees, many who are lower paid direct support staff responsible for the health and safety of the individuals in their care. Thousands of family members who had been counting on the promise of NYS-CARES to care for their loved one when they can no longer do so themselves, have been told that out-of-home care is no longer available to them. Already, hundreds of projects families were counting on have been cancelled.

Governor Paterson’s proposal would cut \$160 million out of services for persons with developmental disabilities, most of which is federal, not State funds. Proven alternatives have been offered to these devastating cuts and they are not being considered.

Many parents and family members of individuals with developmental disabilities rely on services to care for their adult family members with

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**Self Advocacy Association of NYS**  
Capital District DSO, 500 Balltown Road, Schenectady, NY 12304

**Alliance of Long Island Agencies, Inc.**  
400 Garden City Plaza  
Suite 202  
Garden City, NY 11530

**Cerebral Palsy Associations of New York State**  
90 State Street, Suite 929  
Albany, NY 12207

**Developmental Disabilities Alliance of Western New York (DDAWNY)**  
7 Community Drive, Cheektowaga, NY 14225

**InterAgency Council**  
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**NYSARC, Inc.**  
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**NYS Council of Catholic Charities Directors**  
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**New York State Association of Community and Residential Agencies**  
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**New York Association of Emerging & Multicultural Providers, Inc.**  
199 Lincoln Avenue Suite 314  
Bronx, NY 10454

**New York State Rehabilitation Association, Inc.**  
155 Washington Avenue  
Albany, NY 12210

developmental disabilities. Experts believe that the budget cuts proposed by the Governor will devastate these services. Families are terrified by the Governor's proposed cuts. They worry about who will care for their loved one when they are no longer around, due to death or incapacity, to care for or oversee their family member's care.

"Let me die in peace knowing that the system that cares for my child will be there when I am gone," pleads Margaret Raustiala, whose adult son has severe developmental disabilities, including autism, and lives in a residential program.

The families participating in today's vigil want to make certain that the Governor, his staff, legislators and the press have a real face to put on abstract numbers being bandied about as the state debates the current budget crisis.

None of these people deny that New York State has real budget problems. None deny that it will require sacrifice. But all say that it is impossible for the state to responsibly move forward on these issues without measuring their real cost to real people.

There is a better way – we have a plan to raise revenues without cutting these critical services.