



August 24, 2020

Office for People With Developmental Disabilities
Attention: Commissioner Theodore Kastner
theodore.a.kastner@opwdd.ny.gov

Dear Commissioner Kastner:

We strongly object to the recently announced across the board 20% withholding of State only funds to OPWDD provider agencies and other nonprofit organizations providing critical services to people with I/DD. This significant financial action does not consider the health and safety of people with I/DD who live in independent settings in the community and targets some of the most critical supports people rely on such as rental subsidies/Individualized Support Services (ISS), self-direction (OTPS), and Family Support Services (FSS) contracts which often serve as a safety net and life line for so many people in the community.

In addition, as you are aware, state-only funded supports have been put into place to meet significant needs that are not funded by Medicaid. Failure to continue to fully fund these programs such as Self-Direction Fiscal Intermediaries, Mirrored Services, IDD Residential Provider room and board payment and CCO "Non-Medicaid" Care Management services will result in potential loss of services, gaps in care and potentially place people with I/DD, including many people with high or complex needs, at risk of not having their daily needs met. We have heard from families that they are not comfortable with the lack of communication from OPWDD to Providers regarding the 20% withholding. Self-advocates and families are looking forward to written guidance from OPWDD so they can see what the upcoming months will look like financially for their family member and the specific services it will affect. There are a significant number of people supported by a housing subsidy and the families are uncertain how this will affect their family member's ability to continue to live independently. The uncertainty of not knowing if the member will be able to pay the rent and utilities for their apartment makes the future unknown, if the member can continue to live where they have lived or if they need to look at other supports. This 20% reduction would cause health and safety issues to members who have been living independently.

This 20% withholding will have a devastating impact on provider agency's cash flow at a time where the COVID-19 virus and program closures has already had an extreme hit on the financial viability of so many organizations. Care Design NY provides care management to over 25% of the I/DD population in NYS. We have seen first-hand, the positive impact that State funded supports make in people's lives. Any diminution or loss of these supports will have dire consequences. The withholding of State funds for these critical health and safety supports needs to be immediately reconsidered.

Sincerely,

Lewis Grossman, CEO, Advanced Care Alliance NY
James Moran, CEO, Care Design NY
Nicholas Cappoletti, CEO, LIFEPlan CCO NY
Bridget Bartolone, President & CEO, Person Centered Services
Katie Wagner, Executive Director, Prime Care Coordination
Patricia Kennedy, Board President, Southern Tier Connect
Yoel Bernath, CEO, Tri-County Care

Cc: Kerri Neifeld, Office of Governor Andrew M. Cuomo Assistant Secretary for Human Services and Mental Hygiene at NYS Executive Chamber;
Arnold Ackerly, SANYS Administrative Director