Alliance for the Betterment of
Citizens with Disabilities

Empowering People: Providers Shaping Policies

Department of Human Services FY'2028 Budget Listening Session

November 9, 2026

Testimonial of Cathy Chin, Executive Director

Commissioner Cha, Deputy Commissioners McGuire and Mielke, Assistant Commissioner Seifried and Woods and members of the Department of Human Services, thank you for the opportunity to provide comment on the FY 2028 Budget.

The Alliance for the Betterment of Citizens with Disabilities will continue to advocate for an annual COLA for DDD Community Providers/Services and for a change in policies which disproportionately disadvantage individuals who have high needs. HR1 will not end our vision or our subsequent actions for our future, despite HR1's significance in the current reality.

Rights and Access

Recent changes in federal priorities have introduced a tremendous amount of uncertainty in our community. The right for disabled adults to live, learn and work in their home and communities has been challenged by our own federal government. On top of the legal threats, the federal government has cut $1 trillion from Medicaid in HR1. The roll back in funding could lead to across-the-board cuts impacting an entire system of community-based services that people with IDD and their families rely on. We will fight to preserve ADA's integration mandate, but we must not overlook the fact that access is a fundamental component of any right.

A year and a half ago we began the Defending the Achievement campaign, a series of monthly videos the goal of which is to maintain government investment in HCBS, health care and safety net services for EI and IDD by showing the impact of what we do. Defending the Achievement was created in the fog of the Hidden at Home news series and past tragedies. We realized that it is easy to lose sight of the power we still possess and that to the people we serve and their families, the people we employ, and New Jersey's taxpayers and citizens it is our responsibility to make what we do visible, because success is often invisible.

Our agencies get people out of institutions, house them, care for them, acclimate them to the community, guide them, help them secure employment, help them to secure their goals and, for the young, work to prevent and minimize permanent disability. This is a story of great ambition, repeated success, and, yes, failure too.

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“In the institution, it felt like I had been forgotten. When I got out, it was the first time I felt human in years,” a quote from our oldest Defender. And from our youngest Defender, “Anything’s possible. Everything can be imaginable.” From systemic dehumanization to self-determination; an extraordinary achievement.

To conclude, a parent asks, “where’s the legislator who is going to stand up for us and our children?”

No cuts to DDD services and supports. Please consider a COLA increase for all DDD Community Providers, because no agency or service is immune from rising costs. You have delegated responsibilities for running multimillion-dollar organizations to a group of talented executives and leaders. Let them do their jobs and figure out where best to allocate resources

A right without access is essentially meaningless. Maintaining a stable network is essential.

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