



*Coalition Of Provider Associations*

## NEWS RELEASE

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### **DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES ASSOCIATIONS UNITE TO END SETBACKS FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES**

Cuts in funding, new policies and bureaucracies removing opportunities

Five associations, representing 248 agencies providing supports and services for people with disabilities and their families, have formed a new organization to address legal and policy issues affecting people with disabilities and the organizations that provide the supports and services critical to their ability to live as independently as possible in their home communities.

The five associations – Alliance of Long Island Agencies, Inc. (The Alliance), Cerebral Palsy Associations of New York State (CP OF NYS), the Developmental Disabilities Alliance of Western New York (DDAWNY), the Inter Agency Council of Developmental Disabilities Agencies (IAC), and the New York Association of Emerging Multicultural Providers (NYAEMP)– provide supports and services to hundreds of thousands of New Yorkers with disabilities and employ more than 120,000 dedicated professionals as part of their organizations with combined annual operating budgets of nearly \$5.2 billion – supporting two of every three people with developmental disabilities across the State.

The new organization, Coalition of Provider Associations (COPA), will work collaboratively to ensure that laws and government policies at both the state and federal level provide the resources necessary to allow people with disabilities equal opportunities to live fulfilling and productive lives.

COPA will work to raise awareness of critical issues among the general population, educate legislators about the effects of cuts in funding to supports and services over the past several years, and illustrate the effects of government actions that have reversed many of the gains made by people with disabilities and their families in the past 40 years.

“The founding members of COPA have the common goal of promoting public policies that will create opportunities and enhance the quality of life for people with disabilities,” said Peter

*Representing Almost 250 Providers in New York State*

Pierri, Executive Director of IAC. “It is essential that we come together now, to ensure that we continue to have the resources necessary to provide these critical supports and services.”

People with disabilities, their families and the organizations that support them are increasingly frustrated by over \$600 million in State funding cuts over the past four years. These cuts have caused layoffs of staff, the reduction and elimination of supports and services, and long delays for those seeking entry into programs. These actions create barriers and discriminate against some of New York’s most vulnerable citizens.

“Changing realities make it clear that organizations dedicated to providing supports and services to people with developmental disabilities and their families must come together to ensure New York fulfills its commitment to ensure resources are there for people in need,” said Yvette Watts, Executive Director of NYAEMP.

COPA has been organized to obtain efficiencies in its advocacy efforts to reflect a similar streamlining that has occurred in the provider organizations it represents. This collaborative will provide the opportunity for concerted advocacy focused on needed regulatory reforms to align policy goals with the realities of funding, among other priority items. Specifically, the coalition will focus on policy initiatives and bureaucratic layers that have negative effects such as those that add unnecessary levels of oversight, do not generate benefit for the people the programs support, or divert resources away from direct supports.

“Our member organizations have always been efficient in their operations and passionate providers of supports and services for people with disabilities,” said Susan Constantino, President & CEO of CP of NYS. “Recent funding cuts and policy decisions have created a greater need for us to share information and resources. This new organization is one more example of how we work collaboratively to promote opportunities and enhance the quality of life for people with disabilities and their families.”

COPA will identify additional issues that create obstacles for people with disabilities and work collaboratively with families and other organizations with similar goals to end the policies preventing New York from living up to its mandated obligations to support people with disabilities and ensure that they are part of communities statewide.

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