



SAMPLE LETTER TO THE EDITOR FROM A DSP

I am one of New York State's 100,000 direct support professionals (DSPs), providing support every day to New Yorkers with intellectual and developmental disabilities. You've probably seen me, or someone like me, working in the community. I proudly work with these wonderful people and their families so they can all live in the community and have full and rewarding lives.

While my paycheck comes from a community not-for-profit agency, the money to pay me comes mostly from New York State. I deserve a raise – just like the raise mandated for fast food workers. The Governor said private business needed to increase wages to pay their workers a fair wage; we ask the Governor and State Legislature to do the same and increase reimbursement rates for the local not-for-profits that provide these invaluable services.

DSPs' salaries used to start several dollars above the minimum wage. Because of the stagnant pay, now we start at the minimum wage or just above. I know far too many co-workers who left for clerical or retail sales jobs last year. They didn't want to give up our special profession. They just couldn't afford to stay. In fact, statewide the annual turnover rate is more than 20 percent. As a result, most not-for-profit provider agencies have vacancy rates in excess of 10 percent in important jobs.

Those workers who left were supporting families in our community, some working with children with autism; others supporting citizens with Down syndrome or cerebral palsy or a family dealing with a loved one with a serious brain injury. Imagine how you would feel if your family needed that help, but it was no longer available in the community, but only in an institution.

I support the **#bFair2DirectCare** Coalition's "**300 Days to Better Pay**" campaign. Fast food workers are starting at wages it took me years to reach. While my job is rewarding, it is also demanding and every week I see another direct care worker leave because we no longer make much more than the mandated minimum wage. That's a shame and it has to be corrected before it is too late.

So join me, the people and families I support and some wonderful community organizations and write to Governor Cuomo and your state legislators today. Tell them that you support your community, your neighbors and the "300 Days to Better Pay" campaign.

Please follow and like us on Facebook (@BFair2DirectCare) and Twitter (#bFair2DirectCare).