I am a New York State Resident who has read the position paper on the subject of “The Direct Support Professional Workforce Crisis in New York State, Causes, Impacts and Answers,” which was prepared by the New York Alliance for Developmental Disabilities. This concise report has left me with a feeling of grave concern for the most vulnerable members of our society and should have you concerned as well.

New York State prides itself on instituting all sorts of regulations to “protect” its population, but often falls short on providing adequate funding to meet those high standards. As referenced in the position paper, Section 13.07 of the Mental Hygiene Law is one example of a humane and meaningful goal that is not supported by the dollars it should be.

At the risk of sounding impudent, it does not take a tremendous amount of thought to realize that this goal cannot be met without competent, trained, devoted staff providing support and care for the developmentally disabled. What follows is the very simple connection. To achieve this level of staff, one needs to offer a true living wage and benefits. This is simply not happening and must be changed. No one who provides this type of care should be earning less than the barista at a local coffee shop.

The position paper sent to you clearly spells out the crisis we are already in, and the funding needed to prevent it from becoming even more of a disaster than it is now. This funding cannot wait. As with childcare, those who have an adult with disabilities to care for cannot go out to work without proper support. But unlike the need for childcare, many of these family caregivers cannot even go to the grocery store or bring themselves to the doctor to take care of their own health without proper support. For the sake of all these families and the community at large, I urge you to act now and quickly fund the OPWDD correctly with the specific goal of recruiting, training and adequately paying those who are willing and able to care for the most vulnerable in our society.

Sincerely,