



March 4, 2019

Dear Parent Advocates:

This Tuesday, March 5, 2019 at 2:00pm, Governor Phil Murphy will deliver his Fiscal Year 2020 Budget Address in the Assembly Chamber at the New Jersey State House. NJTV will be providing a livestream that we are encouraging parent advocates to view, if possible, at: <https://www.njtvonline.org/news/video/njtv-news-special-report-2020-budget-address/> Soon after the address, the Governor will also release the full text of his address, which will be available at: <https://nj.gov/governor/>

As you know, there is much at stake in this FY2020 budget process for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities and their families. After nearly ten years of flat funding, lawmakers made small investments in DSP wages these past two years. It's critical that funding for DSP wages remains a priority in FY2020. This is where you come in!

In FY2020, the Coalition is seeking a \$36-million-dollar state appropriation to bring DSP wages closer to a living wage that reflects the skill and responsibility required for the complex work. The funding is also needed to ensure DSP wages remain ahead of the recently-increased minimum wage, as we all know that direct support is far from entry-level, minimum wage work. If the state fails to act, there's no question the DSP workforce crisis will exacerbate as workers will likely move to less-demanding jobs at comparable pay, leaving your loved ones without the supports they need.

Your voice as a parent is critical in educating lawmakers on the need for the \$36-million in state funding in FY2020 for DSP wages. Here's how the process works and how you can get involved...

- After Governor Murphy delivers his budget address this Tuesday, the budget moves to the Legislature for review where we need parents and family members to engage.
- The Senate and Assembly Budget Committees will be holding hearings in April seeking input from the public on priorities for funding. We need parents to attend these hearings and provide testimony where possible.
- The coalition will help draft your testimony and provide coaching and support as needed to ensure you are fully prepared. A strong showing by parents in the room is as equally important, so if you don't want to speak, your being there will still say a lot!

The dates for these meetings have yet to be announced. We will let you know as soon as they are. In the meantime, if you're interested in making your voice heard, please send an email to Libby Vinson (libby@absnj.com) at Association Business Solutions, as she is helping coordinate the Coalition's advocacy activities. Libby can also share information on other ways to get involved via social media and letters to the editor.

The importance of your involvement from now until June 30, 2019 when FY2020 will be adopted cannot be overstated. This issue is not just about wages, it's about you and your family. Legislators need to hear your story...

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Valerie Sellers".

Valerie Sellers
Chair, NJ Coalition for a DSP Living Wage
CEO, New Jersey Association of Community Providers