



LIBERTY NEWS RELEASE

Date: March 27, 2014

Contact: Barbara Wool

Phone: 518-954-3202

Email: barbw@libertyarc.org

Liberty Advocates Urge COLA for Direct Workers

Over the past week, individuals, family members and staff involved in Liberty, the Montgomery County Chapter NYSARC's programs joined with Lexington ARC in Fulton County and other local chapters urging state legislators to support a 2% wage increase for direct support professionals (DSPs) caring for people with developmental disabilities in the 2014 budget.

"Our direct support staff provide the essential care and support for the people with developmental disabilities involved in Liberty's programs," said CFO, Jennifer Saunders. "Though the Governor has made protection of these vulnerable people a top priority, the staff who are directly responsible for ensuring their well-being have not received a salary increase for four years straight."

The Executive Director of NYSARC, Marc Brandt, and administrators of CP of NYS recently met with state officials to urge their support of a cost of living adjustment for the direct support professionals employed by their respective member organizations. In a statement released following their meetings, Brandt noted that direct support workers are paid a salary "which may not be much more than minimum wage forcing many to work more than one job. That puts them and their families under ever greater strain and can undermine their ability to care for the people with developmental disabilities who depend on them."

The Governor has not included a wage increase for those who care for people with developmental disabilities since taking office. During that time DSPs have seen their purchasing power eroded by over 8% once the impact of the Consumer Price Index (CPI) for the State is taken into account. That equates to a pay cut for those charged with protecting people with developmental disabilities.

"It is crucial that our legislators understand that direct support professionals are the people we depend upon to provide quality care to the individuals in our programs," said Liberty COO, Candace Opalka. "This increase will go a long way in showing DSPs that the job they do is valued."

Liberty is a member Chapter of NYSARC, Inc., the nation's largest parent and family governed nonprofit agency serving people with developmental disabilities. Liberty supports over 600 individuals with developmental disabilities and their families in Montgomery County, providing day, residential, health-related and family support programs.

###