

2021 Joint Legislative Budget Hearing – February 5, 2021, 9:30am

Committee on Mental Hygiene Testimony – Russell Snaith, NYADD

- 1) Good morning distinguished members of the Assembly and Committee on Mental Hygiene.
- 2) My name is Russell Snaith, and I am a Founding Member of the New York Alliance for Developmental Disabilities (NYADD), with over 5,000 members across New York state.
- 3) I come before you this morning, to speak plainly and frankly.
- 4) When it comes to funding for the disabled and those with Special Needs, this is not a discussion about money, but rather it is a discussion and referendum on morality and priorities in New York State.
- 5) While we are always hopeful for Federal Aid, we must first manage the revenue NYS does have.
- 6) Service Providers have become more efficient in the use of their budgets, has New York State?
- 7) We must look at and rationalize all of the waste, inefficiency, and non-critical discretionary projects New York takes up – at the expense of the disabled and those with Special Needs.
- 8) Let's put the emphasis of Special Interests on those with Special Needs.
- 9) NYADD is a loud, clear voice whose 5,000 members vote in New York state.
- 10) The state has done a reasonable job in assessing the demand for services.
- 11) Yet, the demand continues to rise, and the funding continues to be cut.
- 12) Service Providers are being squeezed to the brink of extinction and unhealthy consolidation.
- 13) Incessant funding cuts to the disabled are forcing policy decisions that put Service Providers in precarious and unfair positions.
- 14) Policies that encourage isolation, warehousing and separation from community and families.

- 15) We must pay Direct Support Professionals a living wage. They provide care to our most vulnerable citizens.
- 16) Their skillset is unique and deep and is not comparable to a fast-food worker.
- 17) Managed Care is not the answer, but rather just another money grab, from those who need it most. It would lead to less choice and lower quality.
- 18) Is the end game here to resurrect the dark demonic days of Willowbrook? Ask yourself.
- 19) When you cut funding to the disabled and those with Special Needs, you hinder their ability to reach their potential and to contribute to society.
- 20) We are not living up to the crito of Governor Mario Cuomo, what happened?