

Honorable Liz Krueger
New York State Senate
Chair, Committee on Finance
Email address: financechair@nysenate.gov

Honorable J. Gary Pretlow
New York State Assembly
Chair, Committee on Ways and Means
Email address: wamchair@nyassembly.gov

Re: 2026 Joint Legislative Budget Hearing on Health

Dear Senator Krueger and Assembly Member Pretlow and Fellow Committee Members:
My name is Julie Farrar, I am a Systems Change Advocate with the Independent Living Center of the Hudson Valley and a member of ADAPT Capital Region. ADAPT stands for American Disabled for Attendant Programs Today. We are the same direct action disability rights organization that crawled up the steps to the Capitol in Washington DC in 1990, to push the passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act.

I feel this is the time to remind you that rights are never given, they are fought for and every curb cut you see and every accessible bathroom stall and kneeling buses with lifts are now just a part of American life allowing disabled and aging New Yorkers access to our communities. We have been fighting over the past few decades for Home and Community Based Services (HCBS), optional Medicaid waiver services that allow people access to home care services and the choice to age in place and remain in our communities. You're welcome.

It is absolutely terrifying to see how quickly Federal Civil Rights protections are being dismantled, at the same time over a trillion dollars in cuts are being made to Medicaid, SNAP, housing assistance and other programs. The fragile spiderweb of services and supports that allow us to LIVE.

We are entering an era of damage control and harm reduction as states grapple with these Federal cuts and loss of funding based on dismantling DEIA efforts (the A is for Access).

Unfortunately, New York continues their losing partnership with for-profit companies through Medicaid Managed Care and contracts with hedge fund owned entities to be "stewards of taxpayers public health Medicaid dollars." I have been heavily involved in the fight for Fair Pay for Home Care. Eventually we won guaranteed pay raises that could lift home care workers from the minimum wage floor and have substantially improved pay for our critical workforce. \$330 million was taken "off the top" by Medicaid Managed Long Term

Care Organizations to benefit shareholders. Public Private Partnerships steal public money meant for Medicaid services in order to fill their own pockets. Governor Hochul has expanded this DOGEy approach by refusing to hold Managed Care Organizations accountable and awarding secret \$11 billion contracts with hedge fund owned Companies to oversee the Consumer Directed Personal Assistant Program (CDPAP) resulting in over 80,000 disabled and aging people being disenrolled from the program and over 100,000 home care workers also leaving.

If losing access to services is the goal, then the plan is working, as intended. Losing access to home care services leads to forced institutionalization and loss of health and life. We are putting caps on the Nursing Home Transition waiver, implementing stringent eligibility requirements for home care that violate the Americans with Disabilities Act and our own State Olmstead Plan. All the while giving billions in New York Medicaid dollars to for-profit entities, who see cost savings at any cost, as a victory.

Do Not implement further restrictions to home care. Do Not put a cap on who can access HCBS waivers to avoid institutionalization. Ensure that Medicaid contractors follow strict reporting guidelines, quality metrics and ensure that information is available to the legislature and the public. Demand that all new housing projects that utilize public dollars commit to affordable, accessible, ADAPTable housing. Pass the New York Health Act! TAX THE RICH and FEED THE POOR UNTIL THERE ARE NO POOR NO MORE! These are things that the members here today can do to ensure the least amount of damage to those of us living in the margins and beholden to the whims of capitalism.

My body is NOT a commodity, neither as an exploitable population that has seen almost all services swallowed up by corporations leading to skyrocketing prices, nor as collateral damage when critical services are eliminated. My life is not an investment opportunity! Shame on those who seem to see us through the lens of expensive, expendable and disposable.

Thank You for Your Time Today,

Free Our People!

Julie Farrar 720-456-5972

farrarjee@gmail.com

Independent Living Center of the Hudson Valley
Systems Change Advocate