

May 24, 2022

RE: OPWDD Staffing Report (S.9086)

As a taxpayer, constituent and a member of the NYS Public Employees Federation, I urge you to pass legislation requiring the Office of People with Developmental Disabilities to disclose the number and nature of state-operated residences serving individuals with developmental disabilities; a census of staff delivering services at those state-operated residences; the status of hiring new staff at such residences; and requiring such report be made readily available to the legislature and the general public inspection on or before December 31, 2022 (S.9086 by Sen. Mannion).

Over the course of the past 24 months, hundreds of residences operated by OPWDD have been closed causing the displacement of hundreds of individuals with disabilities who rely on the state for care. Despite these challenges, OPWDD has been resistant to sharing any information on its efforts to recruit staff to re-open these residences and programs.

This legislation provides greater transparency into the operations of OPWDD and will provide valuable information to the Governor and the Legislature in advance of the 2022-23 state budget. Taxpayers, workers, families and communities have a right to know how the state is managing these assets and how the state plans to meet its ongoing obligations to care for the individuals with developmental disabilities that it serves.

In order to develop effective strategies to mitigate the continued displacement of New York's most vulnerable citizens, it is incumbent on the office to disclosure the nature and extent of its self-admitted staffing crisis, as well as the strategies it is employing to address that crisis.

I urge you to pass this important legislation this session.

Sincerely,