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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Cerebral Palsy of Westchester joined over 3,000 Advocates at RALLY IN THE VALLEY FOR DISABILITY RIGHTS at Rockland Community College

RYE BROOK, NY Rally in the Valley — On Friday, March 13, 2026, **Cerebral Palsy of Westchester staff and program participants** joined over 3,000 advocates from New York in raising their voices at the Rally in the Valley, a large-scale advocacy event representing more than 40 disability, mental health, education, workforce and community services providers throughout NYS. The rally, organized by the disability service agency Jawonio, and aligned with the state-wide advocacy group New York Disability Advocates (NYDA) was held at the Fieldhouse at Rockland Community College. Speeches were given by individuals, family members and provider representatives, as well as NYS Assemblymembers Aron Wieder, Patrick J. Carroll, Chris Eachus, NYS Senators Rob Rollison, Bill Weber, Pete Harckham, Shelley Mayer, and US Representative Mike Lawler.



Advocates from New York City, Long Island, Albany, Western New York, and throughout the Hudson Valley mobilized to address urgent state and federal concerns about NYS funding, workforce shortages, and access to essential disability and mental health services along with key federal policy issues including Temporary Protected Status decision-making and work requirements due to go into effect on 1/1/27. Affordability was a central focus of speaker remarks as well. The rally highlighted the real-life impact of policy and funding decisions on thousands of New Yorkers who rely on these services daily.



According to **Vanessa Wilson, CPW Direct Support Professional** for over 22 years, who attended the rally with individuals from our residential program, *"I heard our elected officials acknowledge that we, as direct support professionals, deserve a living wage. We should not have to work two or three jobs just to make ends meet. It is both encouraging and powerful to see the guys we support show up for their staff—holding signs, chanting, and doing their part to influence change in Albany. They understand exactly what's at stake, and their voices matter."*

John Garnet, CPW Senior Habilitation Specialist for over 25 years, brought individuals from CPW's adult day program and commented: *"The rally's strong turnout—both staff and individuals advocating for one another—shows providers' deep commitment to delivering high-quality care. It also brings together policymakers from across political aisles to ensure upcoming legislation that will help provider agencies fund critical upgrades, increase pay rates, and maintain the staffing levels needed to deliver essential care to all those served."*

Taylor Addison, CPW Day Program Assistant Director, spearheaded CPW's attendance at the rally and had this to say, *"It was a great experience to be there and see the collective strength we have beyond just our own agency. We're so used to seeing just our guys day in and day out, but seeing all the agencies, participants, and advocates come together in one space—united in the fight for better treatment—was deeply inspiring."*



NYS Senator Shelley Mayer, who spoke at the rally, stated that she is *"Proud to stand with providers, advocates, consumers, Direct Support Professionals, colleagues, and friends to ensure that New Yorkers with disabilities, and the people who care for them, have the funding and support they need to thrive. We stand with our immigrant neighbors and with those who dedicate their lives to caring for others. We must invest in our Direct Support Professionals, strengthen Early Intervention services, and support the systems that caregivers and the individuals they serve rely on every day."*

To address these challenges, CPW, along with many agencies aligned with New York Disability Advocates (NYDA), is urging state leaders to include the following priorities in the 2027 NYS budget:

- 4% targeted inflationary increase for nonprofit disability providers;
- The restorations of Care Coordination Organizations as eligible programs to preserving person-centered planning, service navigation, and coordination of medical and behavioral healthcare for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities;
- A CareForce affordable housing lottery preference;
- An employer-assisted housing matching grant program and other homeownership incentives;
- Enhancement of the New York Child and Dependent Care Credit; and
- Restoration of the NYS Office of People With Developmental Disabilities healthcare enhancement.

For more information about **New York Disability Advocates**, go to <https://nydisabilityadvocates.com/>.

Founded in 1949, **Cerebral Palsy of Westchester's** mission is to advance the independence, productivity, and full citizenship of people living with all developmental disabilities including autism, neurological impairments, intellectual disabilities, epilepsy, and cerebral palsy. CPW's main campus is located in Rye Brook, NY, housing a special education school, an adult day program and recreation programs. CPW operates the United Preschool Center in White Plains, as well as six group homes throughout Westchester. Through a comprehensive network of educational programs, day services, residential sites, therapeutic services, employment training, recreation programs and advocacy, the agency helps thousands of children and adults in Westchester and Fairfield Counties live more productive and satisfying lives. The organization's motto is: *Realizing Tomorrow's Potential . . . Today!*

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