



# New Jersey Self-Advocacy Project & Statewide Self-Advocacy Network

A program of The Arc of New Jersey since 1983

January 21, 2020

The Honorable Phil Murphy  
Governor, State of New Jersey  
PO Box 001  
Trenton, NJ 08625

Dear Governor Murphy:

As New Jersey residents who rely on direct support professionals (DSPs) to live in communities across New Jersey, **we respectfully ask that you make us a funding priority in your budget and agenda to make New Jersey Stronger and Fairer.** Thank you for maintaining funding in FY20 to slightly increase DSP wages, but a much greater state investment is needed to stabilize the worsening DSP workforce shortage that is threatening our ability to live successfully in community-settings.

To us, a *Stronger and Fairer* New Jersey is one where we can live safe, fulfilling lives in the communities we call home, supported by quality direct support professionals whom we know and trust. Sadly, this is becoming less of a reality for us every day.

The truth is more and more direct support staff leave after just days or months on the job and positions stay vacant for far too long because wages are not competitive at \$12 per hour. Many retailers already pay \$15-\$18 per hour and with New Jersey's minimum wage on a path to \$15 p/h for entry-level jobs that are far less demanding, the revolving door of DSPs is only going to get worse. We need your help, Governor Murphy, to stabilize the DSP workforce and make New Jersey *Stronger and Fairer* for us.

To that end, we ask that you raise DSP wages every time New Jersey's minimum wage goes up starting with a supplemental appropriation of \$16.5 million (plus \$16.5 million federal match) in FY20 to mirror the 10% increase in New Jersey's minimum wage to \$11 p/h on January 1, 2020. An additional \$16.5 million in state funding (plus \$16.5 million federal match) is needed in FY21 to raise DSP salaries to accommodate the next increase to the minimum wage on January 1, 2021 to \$12 p/h.

We appreciate your attention to this critical issue impacting our lives. Securing competitive wages for direct support professionals will help make New Jersey truly *Stronger and Fairer* for ALL.

Sincerely,