



MELISSA MILLER
Assemblywoman 20th District
Nassau County

THE ASSEMBLY
STATE OF NEW YORK
ALBANY

RANKING MINORITY MEMBER
Mental Health Committee

COMMITTEES
Alcoholism & Drug Abuse
Children & Families
Environmental Conservation
Social Services

Hon. John J. Flanagan
Senate Majority Leader
Room 330, State Capitol Building
Albany, NY 12247

March 13, 2017

Dear Leader Flanagan,

As budget negotiations intensify, I've made additional efforts to be more accessible than ever to the families, small businesses, schools and community organizations who are counting on me to fight for them in Albany. It is a job that I am totally devoted to. A balance sheet may be more associated with the cold realities of the board room, but our budget represents an opportunity to prioritize with compassion and prize human dignity. Our final spending plan will say a lot about what sort of state we want to be.

In my district, there is one constituency who relies on me more than anyone else. They call me because they know I've been there. They call me because I know what it's like to interview night nurses and coordinate service plans. They call me because I can relate to the stress that spills into marriages and threatens careers. They call me because I know what it's like to watch other parents treat college admissions like a nuclear arms summit while I wonder who will take care of my child when I'm no longer here with him. They call me because I care, and because I've worked tirelessly to be an effective advocate. The calls come from families in my district, from families across Long Island and even from people who live in Brooklyn and Queens.

They call me because I know what it is like to have a child with developmental disabilities.

It goes beyond my empathy and their connection to a shared experience. They trust me to find specific, impactful initiatives to champion. This year, there is nothing more important for our community than encouraging the state to fully fund the minimum wage increase for dedicated, talented workers who provide essential care for those with development disabilities.

A vast majority of these service providers are nonprofits relying on Medicaid reimbursements to pay their caregivers. They are directly impacted by the governor's new minimum wage mandates. Unlike a fast food restaurant, these providers cannot raise their prices or purchase less expensive ingredients. There will be no corresponding reimbursement hike to pay these caregivers a living wage. These service providers will either need to cut critical staff, cut important quality-of-life services, or both. It isn't fair to these patients, compassionate

workers, and it's certainly not fair for New Yorkers with developmental disabilities who deserve to lead healthy, fulfilling lives.

There is another way. The state budget could include an allocation to fund the wage increases for these workers. It would require an investment of \$45 million. I know that it is a lot of money, but I know that it is worth it.

In the context of a budget slated to top \$150 billion, this funding seems eminently reasonable. Considering the governor is fighting for hundreds of millions of dollars in new subsidies for Hollywood, it seems unassailable. Considering the needs of children like my son, Oliver, it is a necessity.

I know you share my commitment to creating opportunities for all New Yorkers, and I'm so thankful for your strong leadership. I'm hopeful that we can continue to work together to ensure that our state continues to take care of its most vulnerable citizens. I'm hopeful that you can make this case to the governor as we finalize our spending plan.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Melissa Miller". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Melissa Miller
Assemblywoman 20th District