



March 15, 2011

Honorable Andrew Cuomo
Governor
State Capitol
Albany, NY 12224

Dear Governor Cuomo:

The story appearing in the March 13 editions of the New York Times regarding abuse of individuals in state-operated settings for people with developmental disabilities was, of course, most troubling.

As principal stakeholders in the state's developmental disabilities system, we write to pledge our best efforts toward working with the State of New York to ensure a system that is the best it can be.

New York's developmental disabilities community has long featured a bifurcated public/private system of state-operated and not-for-profit service providers. However, issues arising in either part of the system are, in our view, issues that must be addressed by the entire system. It is in this spirit, then, that we offer our support, ideas and efforts, and commit to working with you, Commissioner-Designate Courtney Burke, Chair-Designate Roger Bearden, Clarence Sundram and all others charged with seeing that New Yorkers needing services are, indeed, served as they should be.

We too agree that individuals who receive services in New York deserve to receive them in a safe environment, one that promotes life enrichment, fosters independence and treats people with dignity and respect. It hardly matters – nor should it – whether those services are provided by a state-operated facility or by a not-for-profit community agency licensed by OPWDD. These are basic values that must always guide our efforts.

Together, the undersigned associations comprise providers of every size and configuration throughout the State, as well as individuals who receive those services and advocate effectively with us, and with State policymakers, for best practices. Our members can bring experience, knowledge, energy and other resources to the task at hand.

We offer you those resources, as well as our commitment to work collegially with you and your team, to see that task accomplished. The individuals served by our system deserve all of our best efforts, and we resolve to do what is needed to ensure they receive them.

Very truly yours,

Jeff Wise
President/CEO
NYSRA

Ann Hardiman
Executive Director
NYSACRA

Robert Klein
President
Self-Advocacy Association of NYS