

Center for Disability Rights, Inc.

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Disability Advocates Ready to Join Cuomo in Reform

(Rochester, NY): In today's State of the State address, Governor Cuomo outlined several ambitious plans for the state. Among the most notable is the plan to redesign the Medicaid program. The Governor called for not just cuts, but comprehensive and thoughtful reform toward stronger programs that have proven their efficiency and effectiveness. Disability advocates could not agree with the Governor more.

"It is time to reform the Medicaid system and end the institutional bias that has cost the state billions and violated people's civil rights," said Diane Coleman, Director of Advocacy for the Center for Disability Rights. "The disability community wants to be part of the solution, and we want to work closely with Governor Cuomo." For many years, disability advocates have urged the state to emphasize community-based services as an alternative to institutionalization for long term care.

"As part of our responsibility to be part of the solution, disability advocates have advanced cost-saving structural Medicaid reform proposals that are more responsive to consumers and fiscally responsible," Coleman said. "We project these recommendations will save New York State alone over one billion dollars over the next five years." The recommendations are available online at <http://cdmns.org/files/BudgetProposals.pdf>.

In discussing the fractured juvenile justice system in the State of the State address, the Governor referenced Willowbrook and the grim history of forced institutionalization, indicating his strong understanding of this civil rights issue. Community choice both saves money, and respects the established legal rights of persons with disabilities.

CDR notes that the Governor does indicate that consumers need to be part of process in developing the solutions, but specifics on this participation are not yet clear. CDR calls on Governor Cuomo to appoint a robust group of consumers to participate in the reform discussions. Consumer advocates bring a very unique and *real* perspective to the discussion and must be at the table if effective reform is to occur.

The Center for Disability Rights, Inc. (CDR) is a non-profit service and advocacy organization devoted to the full integration, independence and civil rights of people of all ages with all types of disabilities. With services in 11 counties in New York State and offices in Rochester, Corning, Geneva and Albany, CDR represents the concerns of thousands of people with disabilities.

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