

Hi everyone,

THANK YOU to everyone who made the trip to Albany yesterday for our rally and protest for disability rights. We had an excellent turnout with representation from 18+ ILCs. About 250 of us gathered in Albany and took over the Governor's War Room for the afternoon. People came with signs and we chanted throughout the day.

As you know, we have been very frustrated that this Governor has made many promises to our community which he has repeatedly broken. Not only does the Governor's proposed budget do nothing to advance community integration, it actively undermines it. His proposed budget failed to include proposals which we were ensured would be included – like the Visitability Tax Credit and the Small Business Tax Credit – it also fails to adequately fund vital programs such as Consumer Directed and Independent Living.

We came with a list of demands, many of which could be accomplished through administrative action or by expressing public support through the remainder of the budget process. The Governor's key staff came out and spoke with Lindsay, Bryan O'Malley, Bruce Darling and Kevin Cleary. However, they were unwilling to make any commitments and would not come out to address the full crowd. We said that wasn't good enough. We gave them time to reconsider, but over an hour later there was no further response.

Given the lack of a response, advocates attempted to present Governor Cuomo with a screw award for screwing people with disabilities. The glass doors to the Governor's office were closed – we blocked the door and hallway for two hours. Ultimately 25 advocates were arrested for disorderly conduct for refusing to back away from the door. Kudos to everyone who took that extra step of getting arrested! There were a number of reporters around throughout the day, including for the arrests. See: <http://wskgnews.org/post/advocates-disabled-people-arrested-albany-protest#stream/0>. We will be gathering all news articles and will share others. Please send any articles from your local media outlets or pictures you took at the event.

Of course, the budget process is not over. The senate and assembly are due to issue their one house budgets later this week. We are hopeful that a number of our priorities will be included. We then have until the end of March before the budget is finalized. We will keep you updated on what is in the senate and assembly's proposed budgets. Stay tuned, the fight isn't over yet!

Thanks also to all those who made calls to the Governor's office in support of our protest, including NYAPRS and MHANYS advocates. Special thanks to CDPAANYS and ADAPT who helped to organize and cover costs associated with the day.

**Meghan Parker**

*Policy Analyst*

New York Association on Independent Living

155 Washington Ave, Suite 208

Albany, NY 12210

Phone: 518-465-4650

Fax: 518-465-4625

Email: [mparker@ilny.org](mailto:mparker@ilny.org)

Visit Our Website: [www.ilny.org](http://www.ilny.org)

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