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Disability Rights Community Releases Budget and Legislative Report Cards In Advance of State Budget and Legislative Session

Albany – Disability rights advocates have released report cards for the 2019-20 State Budget and 2019 Legislative Session. The disability community will be grading the Governor and Legislature on issues of critical importance to the community, including independent living, health, housing, employment, and transportation. Grades will be announced in April after enactment of the Budget, and in June, at the conclusion of the Legislative Session.

“With new leadership in the State Senate, and a voter mandate for change, the disability community is optimistic that our priorities will be fully enacted this year. Not all of our Budget priorities are in the Executive Budget released on Tuesday, but we’re hopeful that after the Budget amendment period and three-way negotiations that they will be,” stated Lindsay Miller, Executive Director of the New York Association on Independent Living (NYAIL). “We’re hoping for straight A’s.”

The report cards lay out the policies which must be enacted, and the programs which must be funded, to ensure community integration for New Yorkers with disabilities. Priorities include increased funding for several programs which are critical to the independence of people with disabilities, and which have been severely underfunded in recent years. This includes increased wages for home care workers to address the home care crisis, and increased funding for home modifications through Access to Home to address the lack of accessible housing throughout the State. Other top priorities include increased funding for the statewide network of Independent Living Centers, as recommended by the Board of Regents. Also on the priority list is funding of the Office for the Advocate for People with Disabilities, which is currently an unfunded Executive Order signed by both Governor Mario and Andrew Cuomo. The Office is needed to provide people with disabilities a voice in state government.

“All of these priorities would help implement New York State’s already articulated priorities – the Olmstead Plan, the Employment First Initiative and the ABLE Initiative,” stated Miller. “We need the resources and laws to turn these policy statements into real programs that will help people with disabilities to realize true independence and community integration.”

“No one has articulated better than Governor Cuomo the regressive policy changes being advanced at the Federal level and their impact on New Yorkers’ lives. While the Executive Budget proposed last week falls somewhat short of what we had hoped for, we recognize that the Budget process has just started. Come April 1, it’s critical that the Governor and the newly elected Legislature with its new leadership follow through on its promises to our community and enact laws to protect the civil rights and provide funding to programs that allow people with disabilities to live independent, integrated lives in their communities,” states Susan Dooha, Executive Director of the Center for Independence of the Disabled, New York and NYAIL Board President.

NYAIL’s 2019 budget and legislative report cards can be found on their website at www.ilny.org

The New York Association on Independent Living (NYAIL) is a statewide membership organization of Independent Living Centers (ILCs), community-based not-for-profit providers of advocacy, services and supports for New Yorkers with disabilities of all ages. NYAIL leads statewide Independent Living Center efforts to eliminate physical, communications, attitudinal, and other barriers to all aspects of life. NYAIL advocates for the civil rights, independence, and full participation of all people with disabilities.