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## **Memorandum in Support A.10732 (Gunther)**

AN ACT to amend the mental hygiene law and the social services law, in relation to housing navigation services for those with intellectual and developmental disabilities

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The New York Alliance for Inclusion & Innovation supports legislation to establish housing counseling as a service recognized by the New York State Office for People With Developmental Disabilities (OPWDD). A.10732 sets the framework for housing navigation services to be a Medicaid-reimbursable service and offered to all individuals with I/DD throughout the state.

The New York Alliance is a statewide association representing 175 not-for-profit provider agencies serving people with disabilities. The New York Alliance envisions a society where people with disabilities are contributing citizens with equal rights and the ability to live full, productive and meaningful lives. The association is the result of ongoing efforts to merge two associations: the New York State Association of Community and Residential Agencies and the New York State Rehabilitation Association.

New York is a state that is geographically diverse and comprised of vast rural areas, large urban centers and sprawling suburbs. I/DD providers are located in all regions of the state and deliver supports and services to the over 130,000 people with I/DD in our communities. Housing plays a critical role in a person's development and stability. It's also key to improving outcomes. For people with I/DD, safe, affordable and accessible housing means becoming a part of a neighborhood and the fabric of their community. While I/DD provider agencies actively seek housing options for the people they provide supports to, traditional funding (OPWDD) for housing is limited and seeking such housing outside of the system requires special skills called housing navigation.

Such non-OPWDD funding sources are often local, the various systems are not easy to navigate and knowing how to put the pieces of the housing puzzle together is complex. It requires ample time, resources and specialized experts to understand the nuances. As a result, a growing need currently exists for housing navigation or housing counseling services. Housing navigators work with an person to develop an individualized housing action plan, assist the person with finding appropriate housing depending on the person's needs, coordinates the person's transition (including the actual move) from current housing to the new appropriate housing opportunity, works with the person to craft a housing sustainability plan to ensure that housing remains ongoing and also has proper linkages to service providers who will deliver other supports and



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services necessary to achieve stability. Housing navigators also foster the establishment of procedures and contacts to create and retain housing.

Through this legislation, housing navigation is established as a service and offered in the cadre of housing supports available to all people served in the OPWDD system. In this era of transformation, the system is becoming more individualized, person-centered and choice is of the utmost importance. People have options as to where they wish to live whether it be in an apartment by themselves or with a roommate, or a home of their own. Learning more about those housing options is key and therefore, housing counseling is an optimal tool to assist people to navigate the vast housing system.

The New York Alliance wholeheartedly supports A.10732 and urges the passage of the bill in the State Assembly.

For more information, contact:

Ann Hardiman, President & CEO

[ahardiman@nyalliance.org](mailto:ahardiman@nyalliance.org)

Carol Napierski, Senior Director of Innovation

[cnapierski@nyalliance.org](mailto:cnapierski@nyalliance.org)

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