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## Memorandum in Support A.10785 (Gunther)

**AN ACT to amend the mental hygiene law, in relation to establishing a credentialing pilot program for direct support professionals**

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The New York Alliance for Inclusion & Innovation supports legislation to establish the direct support professional credential pilot program in New York’s intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD) field. The measure, A.10785 authorizes the Commissioner of the New York State Office for People With Developmental Disabilities (OPWDD), to provide a targeted training opportunity for direct support professionals through a demonstration pilot. Such pilot may lead to a statewide program as outlined in the 2015 final technical report issued by the office: Implementing Direct Support Professional Credentialing in New York.

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.

Direct support professionals are the women and men who provide direct hands-on care and support, twenty-four hours a day/seven days a week to people with I/DD. They are heavily relied upon by the people they support, provider agencies and parents and family members. Direct support professionals assist people with all aspects of daily living and focus on a person’s abilities to become active, equal and full participants in their communities.

According to the National Alliance for Direct Support Professionals (NADSP), “all direct support professionals benefit from access to well-constructed educational experiences (e.g., in-service training, continuing and higher education) and lifelong learning.” A credential program represents a valuable and necessary educational experience that can be offered to direct support professionals in New York State. Coupled with OPWDD’s core competencies and other skills building opportunities offered by not-for-profit agencies, a direct support professional credential would further professionalize the field, advance higher standards in the system, provide opportunities to attain a recognized level of competency, expertise and training that is important to anyone with specific skills and mastery in the respective field. At a time when the sector is once again facing a significant workforce shortage, the credential is an important tool for



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recruitment and retention of staff as it can provide a career path, opportunities for advancement and enhanced wages.

Additionally, it's proven that people who receive services from a well-trained workforce experience better outcomes in the areas of employment, inclusion, social relationships and health and safety. As the state moves the sector to managed care, outcome measurement will be the basis by which services will be delivered and therefore, a direct support professional credential program is valuable in the new environment.

The New York Alliance fully supports a credential pilot program in New York State and urges the State Assembly to pass A.10785.

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