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**LAWMAKERS, ADVOCATES ASK NEW YORK STATE LEGISLATURE FOR
\$2 MILLION INCREASE IN FUNDING FOR STATEWIDE PROGRAM HELPING
NEW YORKERS WITH DISABILITIES ACCESS FEDERAL BENEFITS**

Statewide Disability Advocacy Program (DAP) helps thousands of New Yorkers with disabilities get federal benefits they deserve while saving New York taxpayers tens of millions each year

Albany, New York – Today, touting the 35th anniversary of the Disability Advocacy Program (DAP), lawmakers and advocates from across the state gathered at the Capitol to call on the New York State Legislature to increase funding by \$2 million to the vital statewide program, which helps New Yorkers with disabilities access federal benefits, saving New York State taxpayers tens of millions in the process. Last year DAP was funded at \$8.26 million, \$5.26 million from the Executive budget and \$3 million from the Legislature. However participating service providers have reported that they are unable to meet the demand for services in their areas, turning away thousands of applicants who need help – one person for every individual they are able to assist. This year, the DAP program is seeking an additional \$2 million from the Legislature over last year’s funding level, for a total of \$10.26 million to help meet the strong demand.

“DAP has made a real difference in the lives of disabled New Yorkers for 35 years,” said **Assembly Health Committee Chair Richard N. Gottfried, original sponsor of the DAP legislation.** “It helps disabled New Yorkers access the steady sources of income they are legally entitled to, and generates \$2 in state and local savings and federal payments for every \$1 we spend. DAP is a tremendously successful program, and I’m delighted the Legislature has been able to support it and look forward to continuing to do so.”

"I applaud the diligent and compassionate work of the Disability Advocacy Program (DAP) which has helped disabled New Yorkers obtain vital federal benefits for over a generation," **Senator Roxanne J. Persaud, Chair of the Senate Social Services Committee,** said. "Given that Washington is adding new barriers to the review procedure, it is essential that New York State invests more in this invaluable safety net program”.

"The federal government continues to impose policies that further complicate SSI and SSD procedures, and it thereby falls upon us in the state legislature to ensure resources are available to help vulnerable New Yorkers navigate an already complicated system of appeals. This program is a proven measure to ensure those eligible receive the services they deserve, and need, while saving taxpayers millions in unnecessary public assistance costs. Thank you to Assemblymembers Gottfried, Steck, and Gunther for their leadership, I am proud to join my

colleagues in calling for this additional funding for the DAP." **Said Assemblymember Andrew Hevesi, Chair of the Assembly Standing Committee on Social Services.**

For the last 35 years, the DAP program has been fighting to help some of the most vulnerable New Yorkers, including those with disabilities and the elderly, get access to federal benefits such as Supplemental Security Income (SSI) and Social Security Disability (SSD). All too often, New Yorkers with disabilities' applications for SSI or SSD are denied or discontinued due to lack of medical evidence or other complications. DAP service providers help applicants navigate the complex process of obtaining federal benefits and assist them at every stage of the process, including gathering medical evidence, working with hospitals and doctor's offices to track down medical records, and representing claimants at their hearings.

"I am proud of the work we do through the Disability Advocacy Program. We are able to make a tangible difference in people's lives. However, it's dismaying to have to turn so many people away that could be helped, especially knowing that in doing so, we are losing the opportunity to stabilize the finances of the disabled person while saving taxpayers money", said **Louise Tarantino, Senior Attorney at Empire Justice Center.**

"New Yorkers with disabilities rely on the DAP program to get the federal benefits they're entitled to," said **Jane Aoyama-Martin, Project Director of Bronx Legal Services.** "But right now, many providers are finding it difficult to keep up with the growing demand. Additional funding would help expand existing services to meet the growing need and continue to save New York State millions each year."

In 2018, DAP providers helped close nearly 5,000 cases on behalf of New Yorkers unable to work due to disabilities and medical problems, saving New York State and counties more than \$36 million in retroactive benefits, federal dollars paid back to the state, and savings to localities after applicant moves from locally-funded benefits programs to longer term federal assistance. The program has also allowed programs to focus on outreach to severely vulnerable communities, including homeless and unstably housed people, those who struggle with mental health, immigrants, LGBTQ people, and veterans.

For more information or to find a local provider, click [here](#).

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