



**New York State Assembly Standing Committee on
Mental Health and Developmental Disabilities**

**Public Hearing on the
Adequacy of Housing Opportunities for People with Psychiatric
Disabilities and Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities**

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Legislative Office Building, Hearing Room C
Albany, New York

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We at the Self-Advocacy Association of New York State (SANYs) have been supporting people with developmental disabilities to speak for themselves for over thirty years. We are an organization founded by and for New Yorkers with developmental disabilities. Our board of directors is comprised of people with developmental disabilities and employs professionals to support its important mission.

First, we want to thank you for the opportunity to speak to this committee today. We would also like to thank this committee, NYS and OPWDD for their commitment to housing and services for New York's citizens with developmental and other disabilities. We have seen an increase in funding for community based housing and self-directed services over the years and we are grateful.

At SANYs our position on housing has always been simple: We want accessible, affordable and safe homes in and of the communities of our choice. These choices should include houses and apartments in our names when possible. When self-ownership or leasing is not an option, opportunities should be provided in small group homes that are compliant with the HCBS community rule; they must be integrated, provide community access, chosen by the person, support privacy, dignity and respect, and promote maximal independence and self-determination.

Over the past few years, to the credit of NYS and OPWDD, we have seen a significant rise in self-directed services. While this is wonderful to see, many people receiving those services are still reliant on parents and other family members to offer support. As these natural supports may not always be available, parents and family eventually age or even pass away, this places the individual at risk of needing to transition back into more traditional services such as group homes. We ask this committee over the coming years to give thoughtful consideration to how NYS can secure the sustainability self-directed services and community housing for people receiving self-directed services.

Please also be aware that there are still many of our citizens seeking housing opportunities within NYS. While investment in development has increased in the current budget there are still many in need and it is our opinion that still more funding is necessary. It is also important to remember that while group homes may meet the needs of some, often they are not the least restrictive setting. It is important that individualized settings are funded on an equal basis to group homes. This is the only means to ensure that people in need of new housing, or those residing in a setting no longer appropriate for them, have the opportunity to realize the independence and dignity that they deserve.

We also ask this committee to always remember that, for people with developmental disabilities, any considerations of long term housing solutions must consider a full range of supports and services in order to ensure that the person has meaningful choice and sustainable opportunities for independence. It is important to consider staffing, transportation and employment opportunities when planning development for people with developmental disabilities. Any discussions and decision making undertaken by this committee must include a comprehensive approach to housing. Simply building more homes is never a total solution.

We are confident that this committee, NYS and OPWDD will continue to work with New York's self-advocates to provide necessary solutions to our housing and quality of life needs.