

**The 4% and Caps Ask**

CDSA Members,

CDSA’s most significant ask this year is the 4% rate increase and elimination of median rate caps. This was the lead message of the Public Policy Committee agenda when it was announced last September, and it has been a key message in everything we’ve done since then. We pushed this strongly during the meetings at the Legislative Affairs Conference. And Barry Jardini made the case to legislative budget staff, who put him on panel presentations before the Assembly and Senate Budget Subcommittees.

**We’ve gotten the message across. But it’s not enough.**

* We need a champion in each party in each legislative house who will bring up the 4% in caucus meetings.
* We need other legislators to respond that they’ve been hearing about this in their districts.
* We need one of the key leaders to put the 4% in the budget during the final round of horse trading.

And the only way all of that will happen is if EVERY CDSA MEMBER carries our message to legislators’ district offices. We have approximately four weeks to make the 4% increase and elimination of median rate caps something that lives in the brains our legislators.

**We each member to take these steps:**

**STEP ONE - Make appointments.** Callthe district office of every legislator where you have a significant presence. If the legislator can’t meet with you, get a meeting with the district director. If you can get the legislator or staff to meet you where your clients are, that’s even better.

**STEP TWO – Bring the right people.** If you can’t participate in all the meetings, make sure some silver-tongued staffer represents you. Bring a self-advocate or family member with you. Bring a Direct Support Professional who can talk about the difference between a DSP job and other jobs with the same pay.

**STEP THREE – Prepare.** Download, print, and review the talking points, the support letter you will ask the legislator to sign, and the cartoons. Pull together your own statistics on staff turnover, the number of unfilled positions, the number of people you have on a waitlist or have turned away, which programs lose money and how much, an estimate of when you may need to close a program. And bring the good numbers, too, like how long your organization has operated, how many it serves, and how it changes lives.

**STEP FOUR – Share the numbers and your passion.** At the meeting, present both the business case and the frustration you feel as you hold your organization together. Then, ask for the commitment to support the 4% increase and elimination of the median rate caps. Ask the legislator to sign the commitment form. If you’re not meeting the legislator, offer a choice: you can come back to talk to the legislator, or CDSA staff can make the meeting in Sacramento.

**STEP FIVE – Respond to the response.** If the legislator signs the commitment form, say that you’ll send it to Barry Jardini at CDSA. If the legislator wants more information or has questions you can’t answer, again, so Barry will follow up. If the legislator is positive but noncommittal, ask why. Or ask what you can do to demonstrate the urgency of the need. If you talk with a staffer, ask when you should check back to find learn the legislator’s response. Ask who CDSA should follow-up with in Sacramento. Howsoever the discussion goes, thank them for their time, offer to follow up, and give a standing invitation to visit your program.

**STEP SIX – Communicate what happened with CDSA.** E-mail [bjardini@cal-dsa.org](mailto:bjardini@cal-dsa.org) or call 916-441-5844 and talk to any of us.

**STEP SEVEN – Follow up.** Send a thank-you e-mail. Tell them that you’ll be updating them as CDSA makes progress. A week later, send a story about a client or family and update them on your challenges. Even better, ask clients and families to send follow-up e-mails indicating that they want to know the legislator is supporting the 4% ask.

We know this takes time, but the 4% ask is an uphill struggle. We need at least four champions who will speak out and many more who will line up behind them. This is a concentrated effort for the next four weeks. Can we count you in?