



NEW YORK'S DISABILITY COMMUNITY CALLS ON GOVERNOR TO REINSTATE THE STATE OFFICE OF THE ADVOCATE FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

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The legislation now awaits Governor Hochul's signature

New York, NY – Earlier this year, the New York State Assembly and Senate unanimously passed bills A.3130 (Steck)/S.1836 (Skoufis) to reinstate the Office of the Advocate for People with Disabilities into the New York administrative structure of agencies.

Originally established by Governor Mario Cuomo through Executive Order, the Office of the Advocate was intended to provide a formal voice within state government for New Yorkers with disabilities. The Office helped develop policies to ensure the State met the access needs of people with disabilities. The Office also served as the State's coordinator for the implementation of Section 504 of the Federal Rehabilitation Act of 1973, and compliance with the June 22, 1999 United States Supreme Court decision in *Olmstead v. L.C.* which concluded that unjustified segregation of persons with disabilities constitutes discrimination in violation of Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act.

Under Governor Andrew Cuomo, the vital advocacy functions of this office were moved to the Justice Center, then ultimately dissolved altogether. While there are state agencies that address individuals with specific diagnoses, there is no state agency charged with meeting the needs of the Disability Community in general and large segments of the Disability Community are left without a state agency addressing their needs and representing their interests in state government.

A.3130/S.1836 addresses that problem. The Office of the Advocate will serve as the state's coordinator for the implementation of the Americans with Disabilities Act, coordinate state activities to ensure that state programs do not discriminate against and are accessible to persons with disabilities, and ensure that such programs provide services to individuals with disabilities in the most integrated setting appropriate.

Additionally, the Office of the Advocate for People with Disabilities will represent the interests of the Disability Community in state government by reviewing proposed legislation and regulations to determine their impact on persons with disabilities.

This bill passed in 2019, but was vetoed by Governor Cuomo. The disability community is counting on Governor Hochul to reprioritize the needs of the disability community in New York State government once again.

Dr. Sharon McLennon-Wier, Executive Director at the Center for Independence of the Disabled, NY (CIDNY) said "We strongly support the efforts to reinstate the Office of the Advocate for People with Disabilities. With over one million people with disabilities living in New York City and millions more who visit the city each year, this is something that is needed and long overdue. We're hopeful that the Governor will recognize the need for this office and further support for people with disabilities across New York State."

About Center for Independence of the Disabled, New York (CIDNY)

The Center for Independence of the Disabled in New York is a leading advocate for people with disabilities in New York City. It was founded in 1978 to ensure full integration, independence, and equal opportunity for all people with disabilities by removing barriers to the social, economic, cultural, and civic life of the community. For more information, visit www.cidny.org.

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