

A Message from the Chair...

January 2017

Dear Friend,

Happy New Year! First, it is bittersweet for me to announce the new Chair of the Assembly Task Force on People with Disabilities - Assembly Member Didi Barrett. I am extremely honored to have been appointed to chair a standing committee, but I am also thankful for my years spent as Task Force Chair. I thoroughly enjoyed working with all of you and I look forward to remaining a dedicated advocate for all New Yorkers with disabilities. I would also like to thank the Consumer Directed Personal Assistance Association of New York State (CDPAANYS) for awarding me the Constance Laymon Excellence in Leadership award at CDPAANYS's 14th Annual Conference: Freedom Through Independence, this past October. Receiving an award in the name of Constance Laymon, a tireless disability advocate who dedicated her life towards fighting for the independence of people with disabilities, is a tremendous distinction and while I was never granted the privilege of working with Ms. Laymon; I vow to live up to the expectations that Ms. Laymon set for both herself and the advocates with whom she worked.

The news that I am most excited about from this past legislative session is the signing of Assembly Bill 10707, which will allow advanced home health aides (AHHAs) to perform certain advanced tasks, such as distributing medications and pre-filled injections, to patients under the supervision of a registered nurse. This new law is a huge step in the right direction towards allowing people with disabilities to live independently, in their own homes and their own communities. I commend the Senate and Governor for partnering with us on this priority, and I look forward to more shared cooperation on the goals of integration and independence as we move into the new year.

As we begin the 2017 legislative session, the Task Force on People with Disabilities will be working to solidify a priority agenda that is based on input received from New York's disability advocates and one that highlights the needs of New Yorkers with disabilities. Traditionally that means fine tuning existing bills, drafting new legislation and planning for the next Disabilities Awareness Day. We have begun reaching out to our core advocacy groups, seeking their priority agendas, budget requests and legislative goals. If we have not yet received your priorities or heard your concerns, please feel free to share them with us. And as always, if you have any questions or concerns, please contact the Task Force office at 518-455-4592.

Sincerely,



David I. Weprin, Chair
New York State Assembly Task Force
on People with Disabilities

Assembly Member David Weprin (from L to R) presents Bryan O'Malley, Executive Director of the Consumer Directed Personal Assistance Association of New York State, with the Dr. Henry Viscardi, Jr. Advocacy Award. Joe Slaninka from the Viscardi School was on hand to celebrate.



David I. Weprin
Chairperson

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Didi Barrett
New Chair

*NYS Assembly
Task Force on
People with
Disabilities*



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Legislative Disabilities Awareness Day

The New York State Assembly Task Force on People with Disabilities and the Committee on Mental Health hosted the annual Legislative Disabilities Awareness Day (LDAD) on Monday, May 16, 2016 in Albany. The event was sponsored by Speaker Carl Heastie, Minority Leader Brian M. Kolb, Assembly Member David I. Weprin, Assembly Member Aileen Gunther and Assembly Member Steve Katz.

Bryan O'Malley, Executive Director of the Consumer Directed Personal Assistance Association of New York State, was presented with the annual "Dr. Henry Viscardi, Jr. Advocacy Award", which honors an individual each year who has dedicated him or herself to advocacy on behalf of people with disabilities. This award is given in the name of Dr. Henry Viscardi, Jr. because he was a legendary activist and supporter of disability rights.

As in prior years, nearly 50 organizations that serve the disability community displayed exhibits to provide information and demonstrate the services and opportunities that are available to people with disabilities. Also, two seminars on disability issues were held on the following topics:

- "Implementation of Crisis Intervention Teams in New York State and Linkages with Mental Health First Aid"
- "Open Doors Transition Center and Peer Outreach Projects"

2016 LDAD Legislation Agenda

As part of LDAD tradition, the Assembly passed a package of legislation aimed at making the lives of people with disabilities easier. Last year's legislative package included:

Disability Rights

■ A.5388 (Lifton) – This bill would waive the state's sovereign immunity with regard to application of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, the Age Discrimination in Employment Act of 1967, the Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938, and the Family and Medical Leave Act of 1993 as they apply to the protection of state employees.

■ A.1669-A (Wright) – This bill would require that the services of sign language interpreters be made available upon the request of a hearing impaired individual at public hearings and meetings. This bill would also establish provisions for assistive listening systems to be required in rooms used for public hearings that accommodate over 100 people after January 1, 2018.

■ A.7188-A (Glick) – This bill would provide an exemption to the Nurse Practice Act to establish a program for "advanced home health aides" who would be authorized to perform advanced tasks, including the administration of medications, under the direct supervision of a registered professional nurse.

Elections

■ A.2104-A (Weprin) – This bill would enable blind and visually impaired registered voters to request and receive Braille or large-print absentee ballots for elections administered under the election law and education law, providing them the opportunity to cast their vote independently.

Emergency Preparedness

■ A.2200 (Weprin) – This bill would require every high-rise building owner to establish and maintain an emergency evacuation plan for disabled occupants and visitors. Additionally, this bill would require the owners of such buildings to maintain and update the emergency evacuation plan for persons with disabilities as necessary and ensure that such plan is readily available to emergency personnel.

■ A.2658-A (Weprin) – This bill would aid localities in preparing for and responding to disasters by requiring counties with local emergency management plans to maintain a confidential registry of people of all ages with disabilities who may require evacuation assistance and shelter during a disaster. People would be provided with the option to be included in the registry.

Housing

■ A.4232 (Titus) – This bill would allow tenants with physically disabling conditions that affect their mobility a preference in occupying a vacant dwelling unit on a lower floor in the same project operated by the New York City Housing Authority.

Disabilities Awareness Day, *continued*

Veterans

■ A.4789-A (Ramos) – This bill would establish the New York State Interagency Coordinating Council for Service-Disabled Veterans, define the powers and duties of the council and require an annual report.

Social Services

■ A.3450 (Wright) – This bill would provide factors to be considered when the health care practitioner utilized by the local social services district examines an applicant for or recipient of public assistance with regards to a possible work limitation or exemption due to a disability; require such health care practitioner utilized by the local social services district to provide

an explicit written determination and to present evidence when their diagnosis differs from that of the treating health care practitioner.

Tax Credits

■ A.6243-B (Weprin) – This bill would provide an incentive for owners of residential buildings to retrofit homes for access for people with disabilities.

Assembly Speaker Carl Heastie addresses the crowd at the Assembly's annual Legislative Disabilities Awareness Day in Albany on May 16, 2016 as Assembly Member Weprin looks on.



Task Force Congratulates Advocates for Protecting CDPA Program

The Task Force on People with Disabilities would like to offer its sincere congratulations and appreciation for the Consumer Directed Personal Assistance Association of New York State (CDPAANYS), New York State ADAPT and Concepts of Independence, along with over 600 consumers, workers and others who joined forces in December to help people with disabilities from across the state to narrowly avoid disaster by strongly urging the Governor to ensure that the Consumer Directed Personal Assistance (CDPA) program will be included in minimum wage funding.

Thanks to their intense advocacy, CDPAANYS has been assured it is eligible for payments from managed care plans to meet the minimum wage guidance. Without this hard-won victory, the ramifications to the CDPA program could have had been devastating. In fact, some providers of CDPA services were already preparing to close their doors, which would have had the potential to force people with disabilities out of their preferred at-home living arrangements and into nursing homes in order to receive the personal care necessary to function daily.

It bears repeating just how critically important the CDPA program is for people with Disabilities across New York State. Without it, much independence, community integration and personal control would disappear. While this recent advocacy effort was a gigantic victory to all of us, as disability advocates, there still is much work that needs to be done to protect the CDPA program.

On that end, the Task Force on People with Disabilities has been working to solidify a priority agenda that is based on input received from New York's disability advocates and one that highlights the needs of New Yorkers with disabilities. We are well aware that the integrity of the CDPA program will remain on the forefront of many organizations' advocacy efforts. As we begin the 2017 legislative session, the Task Force on People with Disabilities will keep this priority as one of ours, and I encourage all of you, as advocates, to do the same as well.

Disabilities Awareness Day Poster Contest

For the last several years, the Assembly has incorporated an elementary school poster contest as a component of LDAD. We sponsor this contest because educating today's children both about the challenges that people with disabilities face and the contributions they make to society will make tomorrow's leaders much less tolerant of discrimination. Eighteen students from Assembly Member Cusick's district received awards for their perceptive and creative entries into our annual elementary school poster contest.

First Place Winners:

- Raymond Angelo
Our Lady Queen of Peace, Kindergarten
- Sarah Poppe
Notre Dame Academy, First Grade
- Pamithi Samaththuwa-Wasam
P.S. 3, Second Grade
- Addison Brown
P.S. 1, Third Grade
- Sabrina Gahn
P.S. 1, Fourth Grade
- Ava Giambrone
Our Lady Queen of Peace, Fifth Grade

Second Place Winners:

- Andrew DiSimone
Our Lady Queen of Peace, Kindergarten
- Mattia Parrotta
Notre Dame Academy, First Grade
- Jolie Brandwein
P.S. 3, Second Grade
- Ella Rizzo
P.S. 65, Third Grade
- Haja Timberlake
P.S. 22, Fourth Grade
- Alyssa Colon
P.S. 22, Fifth Grade

Third Place Winners:

- Peter Pineda
Our Lady Queen of Peace, Kindergarten
- Lilianne Samara
Notre Dame Academy, First Grade
- Bianka Thimme
P.S. 65, Second Grade
- Natalie Wynter
Notre Dame Academy, Third Grade
- Jessica Longo
P.S. 1, Fourth Grade
- Julianna Milillo
Our Lady Queen of Peace, Fifth Grade

We would like to thank everyone who participated in the 2016 Legislative Disabilities Awareness Day for making it such a great success and we look forward to seeing you at LDAD again this year.

"It is easier to build strong children than repair broken men." – Frederick Douglass

News... *from the New York State Assembly Task Force on People with Disabilities*



David I. Weprin, Chair ■ Carl Heastie, Speaker



Assembly Members Michael Cusick and David Weprin celebrate the accomplishments of poster contest winners, front row (L-R): Pamithi Samaththuwa-Wasam, Lilianne Samara, Sarah Poppe, Mattia Parrotta. Second row (L-R): Jessica Longo, Sabrina Gahn, Ella Rizzo, Natalie Wynter, Julianna Milillo, Ava Giambrone, Bianka Thimme, Addison Brown. Congratulations to all of our artists for a job well done!