



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Shelley B. Mayer

Senator Shelley B. Mayer Honors the “Coalition for Access” for their Efforts to Increase Accessibility for all New Yorkers

SENATOR SHELLEY B. MAYER August 13, 2024

| ISSUE: **DISABILITY, DISABILITY RIGHTS, LYFT, ADA ACCESSIBILITY**

WHITE PLAINS, NY – Senator Shelley B. Mayer joined members of the “Coalition for Access” to honor them for their advocacy and work to make Westchester County more accessible for all members of the community.

In 2017, Westchester-based advocacy and service organization Westchester Disabled on the Move and Harriet Lowell filed a class action lawsuit against Lyft, a rideshare company, claiming their policy of blocking wheelchair-accessible vehicles from operating in Westchester County and 96% of the United States violates the Americans with Disabilities Act and the New York State Human Rights Law. After receiving testimony from over 250 witnesses with disabilities, federal Judge Philip M. Halpern certified the case as a class action in 2023 and held a trial in July 2024. The matter is currently pending before the U.S. District Court in White Plains.

Senator Shelley Mayer said, “I am proud to honor Coalition for Access for their advocacy for accessibility and mobility for everyone in our community and state. This remarkable alliance of individuals and organizations is determined to ensure no one is denied the right to full participation in public life. I thank Harriet Lowell and Westchester Disabled on the Move for bringing this lawsuit forth, Jeremiah Frei-Pearson for his stalwart representation, and the

Coalition for Access for being fierce champions for inclusivity and equality for all.”

Harriet Lowell said, “Even though hundreds of wheelchair accessible vehicles on Lyft’s system drive in Westchester, Lyft refuses to serve me and all people in Westchester who need wheelchair accessible vehicles. This is wrong. I am proud that I filed a class action lawsuit to end Lyft’s discrimination and to force Lyft to stop blocking service to people with disabilities. And I am proud to be a part of the movement that will end Lyft’s discrimination and provide access to transportation for all.”

Maria Samuels, Executive Director Westchester Disabled on the Move, said, “We thank Senator Mayer for this acknowledgment. It’s been a long hard fight. The Lyft lawsuit to provide accessible rides for our constituency is a major milestone for us as we celebrate 40 years of championing inclusivity, accessibility, and equality for people with disabilities in Westchester County and beyond. We could not have done it without supportive partners like Senator Shelley Mayer behind us.”

Jeremiah Frei Peirson, the plaintiff’s lawyer, said, “Lyft’s policy of blocking wheelchair-accessible vehicle service in Westchester and 96% of the country is wrong, and I am honored to represent Westchester Disabled On The Move, Harriet Lowell, the organizations in the Coalition for Access, and millions of people with disabilities who had the courage to challenge Lyft’s discriminatory policy.”

Westchester County Executive George Latimer said, “Westchester County has always been committed to ensuring that all residents, regardless of ability, have equal access to the services and opportunities they deserve. The work of Harriet Lowell and Westchester Disabled on the Move, is crucial in upholding these values not just for Westchester residents but all Americans. Their efforts and dedication to making our community more inclusive and accessible set a powerful example for all. We stand with them in their fight for justice and

are proud of the strides they have made.”

White Plains City Mayor Tom Roach said, “On behalf of the City of White Plains, I would like to express deep appreciation for the Coalition for Access for working to remove a barrier that prevents people with disabilities from experiencing independent lives. Working together to increase accessibility for all of our residents in an effort to improve their quality of life is essential.”

Also in attendance was Assemblymember Chris Burdick, Westchester County Legislators Terry Clements and Judah Holstein, a representative of Legislator Nancy Barr, White Plains City Councilmember Victoria Presser, Angel Heinz from the Christopher and Dana Reeves Foundation, Maximino Rodriguez from the Center for Disability Rights, Terry Degatano from Westchester Disabled on the Move, Rodney Stanford from Westchester Council for the Blind, Director of Westchester's Office for People with Disabilities Evan Latainer, Jeff Zitofsky from Westchester's Office for People with Disabilities, member of Westchester Cooperative Board Delia Marx, and advocates Donna Ponessa and Mike Howard.

The Coalition for Access includes: Westchester Disabled On The Move, Inc., Paralyzed Veterans of America, United Spinal Association, the Christopher and Dana Reeve Foundation; the Center For Disability Rights, Inc., the African-American Advocacy Center For Persons With Disabilities; the National Disability Rights Network; the National Council on Independent Living, and the Association of Programs for Rural Independent Living.

[Watch the full press conference here.](#)

Courtesy Photos:



Senator Shelley B. Mayer speaking.



Harriet Lowell speaking.



Maria Samuels speaking.