



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

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## Lupardo & Griffo Promote Vision Rehabilitation Bill

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### **Lupardo & Griffo promote vision rehabilitation bill Bill would require licensure of vision rehabilitation professionals**

(ALBANY, NY) – In recognition of Vision Rehabilitation Advocacy Day, Assemblywoman Donna Lupardo (D-Endwell) and Senator Joseph Griffo (R-Rome) held a news conference today to promote legislation (A.8576-A/S.3880-B) they are sponsoring to require the licensing of vision rehabilitation professionals (VRP). Both sighted and blind individuals who become VRPs help visually impaired individuals live successful and independent lives.

Licensure protects consumers by specifying the scope of practice and educational requirements. It also elevates the field and provides incentives for others to consider careers in vision rehabilitation.

“The creation of this license will recognize the importance of VRPs and the important services they provide to a growing population with vision loss,” said Assemblywoman Lupardo, a member of the Higher Education Committee in the Assembly. “This bill will ensure that people with vision loss receive the same high quality services throughout the state.”

"The unfortunate fact is that the care for those with vision loss and impairment is a growth sector in healthcare," said Senator Griffo, serves on the Senate's Higher Education Committee, and has overcome his own lifetime vision issues. "Because there's a direct correlation between our growing aging population with eye disease and vision concerns, we need to ensure that the health care providers who service them are knowledgeable, qualified and experienced."

The number of New Yorkers with vision loss has grown due to many factors. Aging of the baby boomers and longer life expectancies lead to age-related vision loss from macular degeneration, diabetic retinopathy, glaucoma and other eye diseases. Low birth weight babies are surviving, but often with vision loss. Sports, workplace incidents, traumatic brain injuries and other accidents cause vision loss in youth and adult populations.

The goal of VRPs is to teach each individual with vision loss to return to being self-reliant in almost every activity of daily life using adaptive techniques and equipment. This could

include teaching visually impaired individuals to read and write Braille, to use a long cane for independent mobility, to use a talking bill identifier or "talking" speech software to access technology.

The legislation is currently in the Higher Education Committees in both the Senate and Assembly. It is supported by the Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired (ABVI), Guiding Eyes for the Blind, the New York State Ophthalmological Society and the New York Vision and Rehabilitation Association (NYVRA).