



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

David Carlucci

## **Senator Carlucci & Assemblywoman Galef Pass Legislation Creating New “Accessible” Sign**

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Senator David Carlucci and Assemblywoman Sandy Galef were joined by advocates for people with disabilities to urge Governor Cuomo to sign their legislation (A.8193/S.6846) which will modernize the Universal Symbol of Access to be implemented throughout New York State.

This landmark first in the nation legislation calls for the elimination of the word 'handicapped', and changes the icon symbol to represent a person seated in a wheelchair while appearing to be in motion. It will discontinue the use of the offensive and outdated "handicapped" signs throughout the state, and replace them with the revamped "accessible" signs approved by disability advocates worldwide. This legislation will not require replacing old signs currently installed around the state, but would require that when any new signs are created, they feature the new symbol and/or new language.

This bill passed both houses of the state legislature in June prior to the end of the legislative session. In each house the legislation passed with wide margins of support and will now be sent to Governor Cuomo for his approval.

New York would be the first state in the nation to adopt this change. New York City has already adopted this change, and countries around the world are starting to implement this simple change that will recognize that people are not defined by their disability.

**Senator Carlucci said,** "We are again leading the way by being the first state in the Nation to pass legislation to update our outdated "handicap" signs with a more active, engaging accessibility symbol. Working together we will continue to lead

the way and be a shining example for disability rights throughout the country.”

**Assemblywoman Galef said,** “A picture is worth a thousand words. Today we celebrate the action we have taken in the Assembly and the Senate to say that those who are differently abled should not be hindered by outdated language or symbols that stigmatize them or align them with a negative connotation or an image of immobility. These new signs and this new language call for businesses, schools, governments and organizations to help change negative to positive, static to mobile, and help to further incorporate our differently abled community into the mainstream. Together with community advocates, we are here today to urge the Governor to join us in taking the lead by signing this landmark bill into law to change this signage and this language.”

**Leah Serao, Project Coordinator, Accessible Icon Project, said:** "Describing the new image with words such as: active, abled, engaged, ready-for-action, determined, and motivated helps provoke discussion on how we view disabilities and people with disabilities in our culture. The symbol does not “represent” people with disabilities, but symbolizes the idea that all people with disabilities can be active and engaged in their living environment. Changing the symbol is part of changing the universally accepted mindset about people with disabilities."

**Dan Harris, longtime advocate for the Accessible Icon Project, said:** "Just like the disabilities rights movement has always been about getting people with disabilities out into the community, the Accessible Icon is now the next step in this movement to show that we are actively engaged community members."

**Lisa Tarricone, Director of Systems Advocacy and Joe Bravo, Executive Director of Westchester Independent Living Center,** both attended the press conference, and submitted this statement: “Westchester Independent Living Center (WILC) fully supports Assembly bill 9934, which calls for the elimination of the word 'handicapped' and changes the icon symbol to represent an empowered image of wheelchair users. WILC staff worked closely with bill sponsor Assemblywoman, Sandra Galef to assist in promoting these changes, which will help to mitigate the stigma associated with the existing icon.”

“Words have power and create an image—unfortunately the word handicapped has a negative limiting connotation that this legislation seeks to eliminate. The forward moving imagery and focus on Accessible will go a long way in changing how people

view persons with a disability. In the end this really comes down to changing attitudes which we all know can be the most difficult thing to accomplish. I am grateful to Assemblywoman Galef and Senator Carlucci for their efforts in moving this landmark legislation forward and await the time when the Governor will sign this important bill into law,” **said George Hoehmann, Executive Director, Rockland Independent Living Center.**

**Mel Tanzman, Executive Director, Westchester Disabled on the Move, said:**

“The Board and Staff of Westchester Disabled On the Move Inc. applaud Assemblywoman Galef and Senator Carlucci for promoting this legislation which we hope the Governor will sign before the 24<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Americans with Disability Act on July 26<sup>th</sup>. Language and stereotypical images have limited and marginalized people with disabilities for too long. It’s time for government to lead through its actions!”