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Sen. Fahy Introduces Consumer Wheelchair Repair Act to End Repair Monopoly

Bipartisan legislation enacts 'Right to Repair' for wheelchair users, dismantles barriers for wheelchair users and New Yorkers living with disabilities amid budget push for fair funding

ALBANY, N.Y. (Feb. 19) – Today, New York State Senator Patricia Fahy (D—Albany) was joined by wheelchair and disability advocates to announce she's introducing the **Consumer Wheelchair Repair Bill of Rights Act (S.4500)**, aimed at addressing long repair wait times and limited consumer choice for powered wheelchair users. The bill would require manufacturers to provide independent repair providers and wheelchair owners with the necessary parts, tools, and documentation to conduct repairs, ensuring a more competitive and accessible repair market.

A [2022 survey by U.S. PIRG](#) found that 62% of wheelchair users waited four or more weeks for repairs, and 40% waited seven or more weeks. Additionally, 93% of respondents needed at least one repair in the past year, with 77% requiring two or more repairs. These lengthy delays create significant challenges, sometimes leading to serious medical complications for wheelchair users who rely on their equipment for daily living.

"For too long, wheelchair users and New Yorkers living with disabilities have faced outrageous delays and exorbitant costs just to repair essential mobility equipment," **said bill sponsor and Senate Disabilities Chair Senator Patricia Fahy (D—Albany)**. "This bill gives consumers the right to access the resources they need to repair their own wheelchairs or work with independent repair providers, cutting down on unnecessary wait times and improving mobility for thousands of New Yorkers. We're putting power back into the hands of the people who rely on this equipment every day and expanding access to repair shops and consumer choice. Everyone deserves the ability to repair the tools that grant them the ability to live with dignity and independence, and this legislation will make that a reality for New Yorkers living with disabilities."

New York State became the first state to pass a Digital Right to Repair Act in 2022, and the bill follows a growing national movement toward right-to-repair legislation. Colorado became the first state to pass a wheelchair right-to-repair law in 2022, while others have introduced it in their respective State Legislatures.

Moreover, this legislation seeks to break the monopoly held by a handful of large national suppliers that dominate the wheelchair repair industry, often causing delays and limiting consumer options. Opening the repair market would promote competition, lower costs, and ensure wheelchair users regain their independence more quickly when equipment malfunctions.

"During my twenty years as an occupational therapist, I saw firsthand how the ripple effects from wheelchair maintenance issues hamper a person's mental, physical and emotional health. It's isolating and destabilizing. It interferes with work and family life, and places additional pressure on clinicians, caregivers and friends. In the state Senate, we're taking action to protect consumers and promote much better health outcomes because we understand that wheelchairs are a lifeline. I'm grateful that, as the new Chair of the Senate Committee on Disabilities, Sen. Fahy is making this an immediate priority. I'm pleased to support her bipartisan legislation," **said Senator Jake Ashby (D—Castleton).**

"Wheelchair users should not have to languish waiting weeks – and paying absurd costs – for essential repairs," **said Assemblymember Gabriella Romero (D—Albany, Guilderland, New Scotland).** "This bill will empower wheelchair users to not only get vital equipment repaired quickly, but also have information and consumer choice when it comes to their repair provider. Our state has paved the way when it comes to right-to-repair laws, and this is an important measure to keep that momentum."

"Our organization believes that people with disabilities should have rights to mobility that enable them to freely navigate their community independently like anyone else. Consumers, including myself, must be empowered to quickly repair wheelchairs and have other support that helps us maintain independence. The frustration of a broken wheelchair right now is with the repair process, and how much you have to reschedule your entire life, as much as it is being stuck without the freedom of a working wheelchair," **said Alex Thompson, Director of Advocacy, New York Association on Independent Living.**

"As a person that depends on a powerchair for her mobility, having a functioning chair is vital to my health and wellbeing and my ability to live my life," **said Shameka Andrews with Disability Empowered.** "I recently spent two months isolated in my home waiting for a wheelchair repair. Back in October of last year, the motor in my chair during a shopping trip to the mall and sat in the mall for two weeks as I waited for a response from the company. This happened on a Sunday and there's no AAA for wheelchairs."

"Current restrictions on wheelchair repairs limit options for users, forcing reliance on a narrow network of providers, leading to longer wait times, higher costs, and barriers to mobility. This disproportionately impacts low-income individuals and those in rural areas.

Increased access is essential for empowering individuals who use wheelchairs to maintain control over crucial devices for their safety and independence,” **said Timothy A. Clune, Esq., Executive Director DRNY.**

“As CEO of Living Resources, an organization which supports the disability community, I see firsthand how individuals who use wheelchairs are often at the mercy of manufacturers for essential repairs,” **said Elizabeth Martin, CEO of Living Resources New York.**

“Wheelchairs are more than equipment—they are a person's mobility and independence. Timely repairs are crucial, which is why Living Resources supports Senate Bill S4500.”

“The Spina Bifida Association of New York State (SBANYS) serves individuals living with Spina Bifida; a condition that can require the use of mobility devices including power chairs,” **said Julia Duff, Executive Director of SBANYS.** “Spina Bifida Association of New York State. SBANYS frequently fields phone calls from consumers experiencing challenges with timely and affordable wheelchair repairs. We are grateful for Senator Fahy's leadership with the Wheelchair Repair Bill. It highlights a critical issue affecting individuals with Spina Bifida and others who rely on mobility devices. Delays in wheelchair repairs can have profound consequences, not only limiting independence but also exacerbating health issues and deepening societal exclusion.”

“The Arc New York enthusiastically supports the bill sponsored by Senator Patricia Fahy, the Consumer Wheelchair Repair Bill of Rights Act, to support people who rely on powered wheelchair mobility in New York State,” **said The Arc of New York State CEO Erik C. Geizer, MS, LMHC, CFE, CGAP, CHC.** “High costs and long wait times for repairs of electric wheelchairs, which provide independence, access, and autonomy for thousands of New Yorkers, is unacceptable, and we must do better to ensure that people of all abilities have the resources they need to live to their maximum potential. The Arc New York's mission statement reads, ‘Providing people with intellectual, developmental, and other disabilities the ordinary and extraordinary opportunities of life.’ This legislation will ensure that people using powered wheelchairs are able to meet our mission. We appreciate Senator's Fahy's leadership in introducing this important legislation and we fully support its passage.”

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