

Senator Pam Helming

Representing the 54th New York Senate District



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Senator Helming: State Senate Passes Bill to Help People With Special Needs

New Identification Cards Provide Important Information on a Cardholders' Developmental Disabilities to Law Enforcement Officers and Other Emergency Services Personnel

GENEVA – Senator Pam Helming today announced that the New York State Senate passed a bill that she sponsors to help improve communication with people who have developmental disabilities. The legislation (S.2565) creates a new optional identification card that can be given to law enforcement officers or other first responders in an emergency and conveys important details, such as potential difficulties with interpersonal communications or physical contact or an inability to respond verbally, as well as additional contact information.

“This optional identification card would allow an individual with a developmental disability, such as autism, to more easily communicate important information about their diagnosis. As someone who began my career managing services for those with developmental disabilities, I know firsthand how important this legislation is. By creating one standardized card, individuals who choose to obtain such a card will have a new tool at their disposal when interacting with law enforcement or first responders. This bill will help protect the individual by informing others of his or her disability. It will make others aware of certain behaviors the individual has or may be lacking that might make it seem as if the individual is intentionally refusing to cooperate. I thank my colleagues on both sides of the aisle for supporting this important legislation,” Senator Helming said.

The legislation authorizes the state Office for People with Developmental Disabilities to create an optional identification card. The card would contain the cardholder’s contact information and important information regarding the cardholder’s developmental disabilities, such as autism spectrum disorders, that may be relevant during interactions with first responders and other individuals.

Currently, a variety of organizations and localities throughout the country provide similar unofficial versions of such a card. However, these cards do not have standardized language and may not be readily recognized by first responders. Creation of an official document with standard language, appearance, and application standards across the state will improve the ability of individuals with developmental disabilities to effectively communicate important information about their diagnosis.

The bill has already passed the Assembly and will be sent to the Governor for review.

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