

Rebecca Seawright



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Chair of People With Disabilities Assembly Member Rebecca Seawright Announced Passage of Legislative Disability Awareness Day Package

Assembly Member Rebecca today announced the passage of legislation and resolutions in honor of Legislative Disabilities Awareness Day that establish new disability commissions, expand employment accessibility, enable disability discrimination lawsuits against the state, and honor disability advocates.

“As the Chair of the Assembly Committee on People with Disabilities, the package of bills that we passed for Legislative Disabilities Awareness Day is a step in the right direction for achieving full equality for millions of people living in New York with disabilities,” Assembly Member Seawright said. *“I commend Speaker Heastie and my colleagues for their support of this legislation passed today that will promote inclusion, dignity, and respect for New Yorkers living with disabilities.”*

Over 25 advocacy organizations joined the awareness day in the Well of the Assembly to exhibit their services and lobby legislators.

Legislation included in the package would change the name of the Developmental Disabilities Planning Council (DDPC) to the State Council on Developmental Disabilities and update the language in the law to comply with federal requirements for “person first” language ([A.6543](#), Seawright).

“I am proud to have passed legislation to increase representation of people with disabilities on our State’s planning council. With the passage of this bill, sixty percent of representatives will consist of people with a disability. At least one third of representation by people with an intellectual or developmental disability,” Seawright explained. *“Additionally, the bill renames the ‘Disabilities Planning Council’ to the ‘State Council on Developmental Disabilities,’ bringing the State into compliance with person-first language to put the person before their disability.”*

Included in the legislative package are bills that would make it easier for New Yorkers with disabilities to access services. One bill would establish a People with Disabilities Access to Programs Commission. The commission would make recommendations for new laws to help streamline the process for New Yorkers getting access to the programs and services they need ([A.1200](#), Epstein).

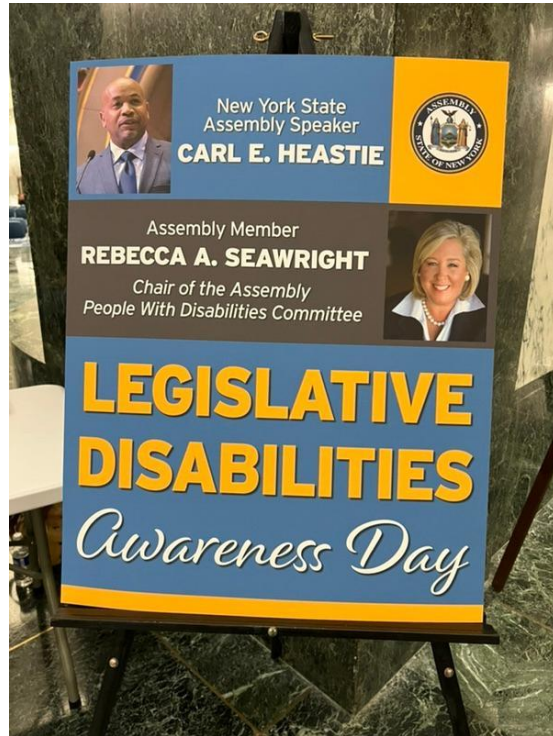
Currently there is no state agency dedicated to the deaf community. Legislation to pass today would create the Commission on the Deaf, Deafblind and Hard of Hearing, which would provide deaf, deafblind or hard of hearing New Yorkers with a one stop location in state government where they can access available services and resources ([A.5683](#), Zebrowski).

Included in the legislative package are bills that would update New York State law to ensure our government better serves those with disabilities. One bill would create more employment opportunities for disabled people within New York State government by allowing an individual with disabilities or disabled veteran to hold full-time or part-time positions for purposes of eligibility for recruitment for state employment ([A.6480](#), Burdick).

Another would waive the state's sovereign immunity to claims under the Americans with Disabilities Act, the Fair Labor Standards Act, the Age Discrimination in Employment Act and the Family and Medical Leave Act, allowing state employees to sue New York State for damages due to violations of those laws ([A.6541](#), Kelles).

The two resolutions in this legislative package memorialize Governor Hochul to proclaim today, May 15, 2023, as New York State Assembly Legislative Disability Awareness Day, and mourn the death of Judith Heumann, a tireless leader and advocate for the Disability Rights Movement.

The legislative package honored Judy's legacy including bills allowing people with disabilities to fully participate in their communities and ensure they equal access to opportunities that help all New Yorkers thrive.







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