

2011-J3856

LEGISLATIVE RESOLUTION commending Abilities! upon the occasion of the celebration of its 60th Anniversary

WHEREAS, It is the sense of this Legislative Body to recognize that the quality and character of life in the communities of New York State are reflective of the concerned and dedicated efforts of organizations and individuals who devote themselves to the welfare of the community and its citizenry and have made strong contributions to the disability community; and

WHEREAS, Attendant to such concern and fully in accord with its long-standing traditions, this Legislative Body is justly proud to commend Abilities! upon the occasion of the celebration of its 60th Anniversary; and

WHEREAS, Abilities!, located in Albertson, New York is a nonprofit organization dedicated to empowering children and adults with disabilities to be active, independent, and self-sufficient participants of society; and

WHEREAS, Through education, training, technology, research, leadership and example, Abilities! seeks to provide the highest quality services and to influence state and national attitudes, policies and legislation in ways which will provide the greatest benefit for people with disabilities; and

WHEREAS, Abilities!, originally Abilities, Inc., formerly known as the National Center for Disability Services (NCDS) began in a garage in West Hempstead, New York in 1952 and successfully demonstrated that people with disabilities could be productive contributors to society; today, Abilities! is a significant provider of community-based services to thousands of people with disabilities; and

WHEREAS, Initially, staffed primarily by disabled World War II and

Korean War veterans, Abilities, Inc. provided assembly and factory work for many defense contractors in the local area; the reputation of Abilities, Inc. grew to the point where contracts were awarded to it from such industry giants as Grumman, General Electric, IBM and the Department of Defense; and

WHEREAS, It was the mission of founder, Dr. Henry Viscardi, Jr. to show that disabled veterans had the skills and abilities to be successful, productive employees who could bring great qualities and value to the workplace; and

WHEREAS, In the early 1960s, Dr. Viscardi moved Abilities, Inc. to a larger facility, its current home in Albertson, New York, and expanded the National Center for Disability Services to include vocational training and job placement for all people with disabilities and, in 1962, he established an accredited, independent school for children with severe physical disabilities, now known as the Henry Viscardi School (HVS); and

WHEREAS, Abilities! is the umbrella agency for a network of non-profit organizations, each with a specific area of expertise, all of which serve individuals with disabilities; and

WHEREAS, In addition to the Henry Viscardi School, its programs include Just One Break, Inc. (JOB), co-founded by Orin Lehman, Eleanor Roosevelt, Bernard Baruch and Howard Rusk in 1947 to serve veterans with disabilities; now, the National Business and Disability Council (NBDC), NBDCJOB is a business-to-business membership organization providing services to employers to assist them in recruiting, retaining and advancing workers with disabilities; and

WHEREAS, Among Abilities!' other programs are the Global Institute which works to identify, research and promote innovative and promising practices in special education and rehabilitation for persons with disa-

bilities through the establishment of innovative collaboratives with universities and other organizations both in the United States and abroad; the Nathaniel H. Kornreich Technology Center which showcases

state-of-the-art assistive technology that assists children and adults with disabilities to become more independent and self-sufficient; and the Smeal Learning Center, a unique training facility which offers technology and multi-media resources including video and audio production and captioning along with teleconferencing and accessible training space; and

WHEREAS, In addition, Abilities!' National Business & Disability Council, comprised of many Fortune 1000 corporate members, is a leading national resource for the successful integration of persons with disabilities into the workforce and consumer marketplace and, its Research & Evaluation Center (REC) conducts research, provides training, and supports the exchange of information so people with disabilities can participate fully in community life; and

WHEREAS, Founded in 1952 by Dr. Henry Viscardi, Jr., Abilities!, now ably led by President and Chief Executive Officer John D. Kemp, has evolved into one of the world's foremost facilities for educating and training people with disabilities; and

WHEREAS, The dedication, commitment, and significant accomplishments of Abilities! and all those who have been associated with it over the years truly merit the recognition of this Legislative Body and the appreciation of all those who have benefited from its services; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That this Legislative Body pause in its deliberations to honor and commend Abilities! upon the occasion of the celebration of its 60th Anniversary; and be it further

RESOLVED, That a copy of this Resolution, suitably engrossed, be transmitted to Abilities!.