



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Catharine Young

## Senator Young Passes Bill to Improve Transportation for People with Developmental Disabilities

CATHARINE YOUNG June 20, 2014

| ISSUE: **TRANSPORTATION, DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES**



**For Release:** Immediate, June 20, 2014

*Senate Bill 7798 Would Assist Developmentally Disabled Individuals in Rural Areas*

ALBANY - Transportation for people with developmental disabilities can be a difficult challenge, especially in rural areas. Senator Catharine Young (R,C,I,-Olean) has announced the state Senate's passage of legislation to improve the transportation services available.

“Many people with developmental disabilities are reliant upon public or not-for-profit transportation systems to stay connected and involved in their communities and the vital programs they utilize in pursuing their education, employment, and health needs. They lead active and engaged lifestyles, and we need to support them so they can flourish and reach their full potential as individuals,” said Senator Young.

Under the provisions of the bill, the Commissioner of the Department of Transportation (DOT) and Commissioner of the Office for People with Developmental Disabilities (OPWDD) must establish an integrated transportation demonstration program for people with developmental disabilities.

Currently, long term care service providers are experiencing significant changes as a result of federal mandates. They are increasingly moving towards smaller community-based settings while also focusing on fuller integration of people with developmental disabilities into their communities. Efficient transportation systems for those who receive these services and care are all the more important to ensure individuals are able to move among the various residential, day, and employment settings they are involved in on a daily basis. In rural communities, the need for effective transportation is even more pronounced.

By coordinating routes and schedules with public transportation systems, not-for-profit transportation providers can avoid unnecessary duplication and more efficiently provide for those dependant on their services.

The demonstration would also provide an opportunity for people without developmental disabilities to participate in the new system. Routine evaluation of its effectiveness would be reported to the Commissioners of DOT and OPWDD. Participating providers would be tasked with identifying net savings derived from this coordination, and OPWDD and DOT would work to modify funding methodologies in support of ongoing transportation needs

for those individuals who utilize their services.

“We think that with this bill, Senator Young has taken a big step forward toward helping people get the transportation they need to engage in productive employment. This maximizes the potential of these individuals by maximizing the potential of transportation assets already at our disposal,” said NYSARC Executive Director Marc Brandt.

“Senator Young’s effort in introducing this important legislation once again demonstrates her leadership in understanding and appreciating issues that impact upon individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities and their families, as well as on human service providers that are committed to supporting persons with disabilities,” said Paul Cesana, Executive Director at The Resource Center.

“In passing this legislation, the full Senate realizes that without adequate transportation, people cannot access opportunities for employment, education, healthcare, and community life, and that successful community inclusion as directed by Governor Cuomo’s New York State Olmstead Plan is dependent upon reliable and accessible transportation.

“The Resource Center has undertaken a number of initiatives to collaborate with county government and other community providers to address the many transportation challenges that exist. It is our hope that Senator Young’s legislation, if passed by the Assembly and signed by the Governor, will begin the development of a process that eliminates regulatory and bureaucratic barriers so as to create better and more meaningful lives for all New Yorkers,” said Mr. Cesana.

Cynthia Neu, The Resource Center’s Mobility Coordinator, said passage of the legislation would further ongoing efforts to create new mobility options for people with disabilities.

“Over the past few years, The Resource Center has played an integral part in reducing transportation-related barriers and increasing the capacity of the availability of transportation options in our county through a collaborative mobility management process,” Ms. Neu said.

“This process has included county government, local human service agencies, public transit vendors, the New York State Department of Transportation, and the state’s Developmental Disabilities Regional Office for Western New York and the Finger Lakes.

“While significant progress has been achieved, major regulatory and funding barriers continue to impede further progress. Senator Young’s legislation is a welcome stimulus and opportunity to break through some of these barriers and to achieve some new results that are desperately needed,” said Ms. Neu.

Senator Young said, “Every person with developmental disabilities deserves to live a full life where they have the ability to move between their home, day programs, recreational pursuits, and jobs. They should not be prevented from doing all of the things they are capable of simply because transportation infrastructure is not meeting their needs. I am delighted by this bill’s passage in the Senate and look forward to it also passing in the State Assembly.”

###