

2017-J3094

Senate Resolution No. 3094

BY: Senator BRESLIN

HONORING Dena DeFazio upon the occasion of her designation as recipient of the Robert F. Bensing Award by the Prisoners' Legal Services of New York

WHEREAS, It is incumbent upon the people of the State of New York to recognize and acknowledge those within our midst who have made significant contributions to the quality of life therein; and

WHEREAS, Dena DeFazio has given not only of her time and energies but also of her competence, intelligence and leadership and consequently has been designated for special recognition; and

WHEREAS, This Legislative Body is justly proud to honor Dena DeFazio upon the occasion of her designation as recipient of the Robert F. Bensing Award by the Prisoners' Legal Services of New York to be celebrated on Wednesday, October 4, 2017; and

WHEREAS, Prisoners' Legal Services of New York (PLS) was founded in 1976 under the sponsorship of the New York State Bar Association in response to the devastating 1971 Attica riot; and

WHEREAS, The PLS founders sought to address one of the major reasons for the riot - the lack of prisoners' access to the courts and the almost complete absence of attorneys to present their complaints in a

legal forum; and

WHEREAS, PLS provides critical civil legal services to over 51,000 inmates confined in 54 New York State prisons; furthermore, PLS provides prisoners with non-violent ways to resolve disputes thereby reducing tensions and hostility and helping create a safer environment for prisoners and correctional staff alike; and

WHEREAS, Dena DeFazio is receiving the auspicious Robert F. Bensing Award in recognition of her exceptional commitment to volunteerism, ensuring that poor and disadvantaged individuals incarcerated in New York State have access to justice, through the PLS Pro Bono Partnership Program; and

WHEREAS, Dena DeFazio is a third year law student at Albany Law School; she received a Bachelor of Science degree at SUNY Brockport in 2011, and a Master of Social Work at SUNY Buffalo in 2014; and

WHEREAS, Prior to attending law school, Dena DeFazio worked as a social worker, providing supervised visitation and clinical counseling to parents with children in foster care; and

WHEREAS, While in law school, Dena DeFazio has interned at Albany County Family Court in the chambers of The Honorable Susan Kushner and at Albany Law School's Government Law Center; she also worked as a Summer Law Clerk at Barclay Damon LLP, and is looking forward to joining the firm as an associate next fall; and

WHEREAS, Currently, Dena DeFazio is a legal intern in Albany Law Clinic and Justice Center's Health Law Clinic; and

WHEREAS, Dena DeFazio has received Dean's List recognition

throughout her law school education, and is an Associate Editor of the Albany Law Review; she was also a Dean Thomas Sponsler Honors Teaching Fellow for Federal Civil Procedure, and the 2016-2017 Project Director of Albany Law's Prisoners' Rights Pro Bono Project; and

WHEREAS, A passionate advocate for the LGBTQ+ community, Dena Defazio is the President of OUTLaw, Albany Law's LGBTQ+ and allied student organization, the Northern Regional Chair for the National LGBT Bar Association's Law Student Congress, and a volunteer at the Pride Center of the Capital Region; and

WHEREAS, Rare indeed is the impressive dedication shown by an individual for the benefit of others which Dena DeFazio has displayed throughout her life; and

WHEREAS, It is the sense of this Legislative Body that when individuals of such noble aims and accomplishments are brought to our attention, they should be celebrated and recognized by all the citizens of this great Empire State; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That this Legislative Body pause in its deliberations to honor Dena DeFazio upon the occasion of her designation as recipient of the Robert F. Bensing Award by the Prisoners' Legal Services of New York; and be it further

RESOLVED, That a copy of this Resolution, suitably engrossed, be transmitted to Dena DeFazio.