



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Pamela Helming

## Senator Helming: More Than 6,000 Special Needs ID Cards Requested So Far

SENATOR PAM HELMING April 24, 2019

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GENEVA – Senator Pam Helming today announced that the New York State Office for People With Developmental Disabilities has received more than 6,000 requests for developmental disabilities identification cards since the program was implemented in February. The free, optional ID cards help improve communication between people who have developmental disabilities and others, particularly during an emergency situation. The card can be given to law enforcement officers and other first responders, and it conveys

important details related to the person's special needs, such as potential difficulties with interpersonal communications or physical contact, an inability to respond verbally, and additional contact information.

“As someone who began my career managing services for those with developmental disabilities, I know firsthand how crucial it is for people with special needs to be able to communicate with those around them, especially in an emergency. It is also critical for our first responders to be able to adequately assess a situation and properly respond to it during a crisis. This initiative accomplishes both of those goals and helps keep the public, our emergency personnel, and those with developmental disabilities safe. Individuals who choose to obtain a developmental disabilities identification card will have a new tool at their disposal when interacting with law enforcement officers or first responders. I highly encourage those with developmental disabilities and their family members to consider requesting a card. It is terrific that the program is working so well and that so many people have requested cards. Thank you to everyone at the New York State Office for People With Developmental Disabilities for your great work implementing this program,” Senator Helming said.

The optional ID cards for people with developmental disabilities were created following legislation that Senator Helming sponsored directing OPWDD to implement such a program. The Senate and Assembly both passed the bill (S.2565/A.249) unanimously last year, and the Governor signed it into law in August 2018. The ID cards are one important step in improving communication among people with autism and other disabilities and emergency responders. Combined with Crisis Intervention Team training funding that Senator Helming secured to help local law enforcement and first responders identify mental health situations and respond appropriately, these ID cards can potentially save lives and keep our communities safe.

Of the more than 6,000 ID cards requested so far, OPWDD has returned approximately 2,800 cards to those who have requested them. OPWDD is also currently processing 200 requests per day. People with developmental disabilities or their loved ones can request a card by visiting <https://opwdd.ny.gov/iddidcards>.

The goal of the card program is to help first responders, such as law enforcement officers, firefighters, and emergency services personnel, better understand and interact with people with developmental disabilities who may not be able to communicate their situation effectively. The card includes the card bearer's name, address, date of birth and emergency contact information.