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Sen. Helming, Advocates Urge Governor to Support Disability Community

GENEVA – Senator Pam Helming today joined local advocates to call on Governor Cuomo to sign into law a bill she supports to permit Medicaid coverage for people with disabilities who require complex rehabilitation technology (CRT) to meet their medical needs. CRT involves individually configured equipment and technology that allows people with specific diagnoses and physical conditions to maintain their independence. The legislation (S.5741/A.7492) passed both the Senate and Assembly with overwhelming bipartisan support.

“It is important that people with disabilities, limitations, and special needs of any kind are treated as individuals and with dignity. They should have the same opportunities that the rest of us have- opportunities to lead fulfilling, satisfying, and rewarding lives! This includes access to CRT, such as specialized wheelchairs that help them maintain their independence and mobility in spite of their physical limitations. This legislation cuts the red tape to give disabled people the tools they need to live their lives and stay safe and healthy. This equipment is not an “extra,” it is a necessity. I am proud to support this bill and will continue to work with advocates in the Wayne-Finger Lakes region to get it signed into law” Senator Helming said.

For people with significant physical or functional limitations, having the appropriate equipment can mean the difference between constant pain and immobility and an active, fulfilling life. A certain portion of people with disabilities depend on medically necessary, personalized equipment to maintain their mobility, quality of life, and independence. CRT includes individually configured manual and power wheelchairs, adaptive seating and position items, and other equipment designed to meet a person’s unique needs.

Ms. Michelle Fridley, a Canandaigua resident and Ms. Wheelchair New York USA, said, “Complex Rehabilitation Technology (CRT) provides many people with disabilities with equipment that is custom made and fitted for us. It is based on our particular needs and bodies and allows us to have a greater quality of life. My wheelchair is measured to fit my height and width. It has a cushion and a tilt feature that prevents me from getting pressure sores. It reclines and the footrests elevate to help with circulation and for performing different tasks. Because of CRT, I can decide where I want to go and what I want to do. My wheelchair doesn’t limit me but gives me the freedom of movement to live my life. Being paralyzed, this is priceless.”

Mr. Bobby Greco, a Geneva resident and local disabilities advocate, said, “As a disabled man who has lived in Upstate New York my entire life, challenges are nothing new. However, under the Governor’s policies, I have had to face new challenges that have nothing to do with my disability and it has become increasingly more difficult for me live in this state and be able to get the things I need to live a successful life. I have even been

told that I am no longer disabled, which apparently my body never got that memo, and was cut off from my insurance and other benefits that I depend on to be able to work toward my goals in life. However, I think there is a way we can all work together to solve this issue. Thankfully, I have been blessed with an incredible family and support system that has not only shaped me into who I am today but will also make sure things like this do not happen. Unfortunately, that is not the norm. I am in a demographic that generally can't fight for themselves and doesn't have a great support system, so the Governor's policies are devastating to most. People like me have to fight and beg for equipment that is necessary for us to live a reasonable life. That is why I am here to fight!"

Senator Helming represents the 54th Senate District, which consists of Seneca and Wayne Counties, parts of Cayuga and Ontario Counties, and the towns of Lansing and Webster. For more information, please visit Senator Helming's website, or follow @SenatorHelming on Facebook or Twitter.

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