

Center for Disability Rights, Inc.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: June 10, 2010

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Senate Passes Critical Disability Legislation

(Rochester, NY): Today, disability advocates celebrate a major step forward with the passage of several bills in the New York State Senate that support people with disabilities' independence. The package of legislation recognizes the upcoming 20th anniversary of the landmark Americans with Disabilities Act (1990) and New York's continued commitment to advancing the civil rights of people with disabilities.

Included in the package is S.7860 introduced by Senator Addabbo (Queens), which addresses polling site accessibility. The same-as bill already passed the Assembly. "This is a major step forward for our community," said Diane Coleman, Director of Advocacy for the Center for Disability Rights. "Everyone has the right to vote and yet people with disabilities continuously face physical barriers to casting their vote. This bill will help ensure that *all* New Yorkers – with and without a disabilities – will be able to participate in the process."

Also included in the Senate package is S.2933 introduced by Senator Duane (Manhattan), which establishes a cap on paratransit fares. This bill will prevent the cost of paratransit rides from exceeding regular bus route fares. This bill is of particular importance to the people of Rochester who face continuous discrimination with the Rochester Genesee Regional Transportation Authority (RGRTA)'s paratransit system in both access to and cost of service. "As a disabled person living on SSI who can't use the buses, I can't afford to pay twice the fare that bus riders pay," said Shelly Perrin, a CDR board member. "The fare is not fair."

Finally, there are two bills that incorporate federal provisions into state law. S.7482, which already passed in the Assembly, was introduced by Senator Huntley (Queens) and incorporates Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) into state law. Title II of the ADA provides protections against discrimination on the basis of disability in services provided by public entities, including state and local governments. S.7800 introduced by Senator Squadron (Manhattan) would incorporate the housing provisions of Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, which requires set-aside accessible housing units for people with disabilities, and yet too often developers violate this requirement. By incorporating these provisions into state law, state agencies will have more enforcement authority to protect the civil rights of people with disabilities.

While the passage of these bills represents a major step forward – and the New York State Senate deserves to be commended today – the fight for equal access and full inclusion in the community for people with disabilities continues.

The Center for Disability Rights, Inc. (CDR) is a non-profit service and advocacy organization devoted to the full integration, independence and civil rights of people of all ages with all types of disabilities. With services in 13 counties in New York State and offices in Rochester, Corning, Geneva, Albany, and New York City, CDR represents the concerns of thousands of people with disabilities.

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