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Disability Rights Advocates Applaud Governor Cuomo for Reaffirming the State's Commitment to the Americans with Disabilities Act by Incorporating Title II into State Statute

(Albany, NY) July 26th marks the 25th anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), the most comprehensive anti-discrimination law ever passed to protect the civil rights of individuals with disabilities in all areas of public life. The ADA enables people with disabilities to participate more fully in their communities, compete effectively for jobs, travel, and gain access to the goods and services that most Americans take for granted. As stated in its preamble, the ADA's purpose is "to assure equality of opportunity, full participation, independent living, and economic self-sufficiency for individuals with disabilities." It is also the legal foundation for the 1999 Supreme Court *Olmstead* decision which held that people with disabilities have the right to live and receive services in the most integrated setting appropriate to their needs. There are events taking place all over New York State this month to commemorate this groundbreaking law.

Governor Cuomo is honoring this landmark anniversary by signing a bill which would incorporate Title II of the ADA into New York State Human Rights law. Title II of the ADA prohibits discrimination on the basis of disability by government entities. The New York State Human Rights Law includes some, but not all, of the ADA's protections for people with disabilities. This causes needless confusion for government officials in attempting to comply with both statutes.

"Enactment of A.136/S.1405 reinforces the State's commitment to the ADA by adding Title II language to State statute, further clarifying the obligations of government officials and strengthening the civil rights protections for people with disabilities" stated Lindsay Miller, Executive Director of the New York Association on Independent Living (NYAIL).

"Given the minimal resources which the federal government devotes to ADA enforcement, the availability of state enforcement mechanisms through the Human Rights Law are essential to ensure equal opportunity in the area of government services" Miller explains.

This success has been a long time coming. The State has already incorporated the provisions of Title I (1997) and Title III (2007) into State statute. Disability advocates have been advocating for Title II to be incorporated into state law for over twenty years. The 25th anniversary of the ADA is an excellent time for New York to reaffirm its commitment to the full integration of people with disabilities.

“Governor Cuomo has advanced many policies to ensure the rights of people with disabilities in New York. We commend Governor Cuomo for strengthening protections for people with disabilities by signing this bill” says Sue Hoger, Executive Director of the Resource Center for Accessible Living and NYAIL Board Chair.

Frank Pennisi, Disability Rights and Access Coordinator for the Southern Tier Independence Center and long-time champion for this bill states "After advocating for passage of this bill for so many years, it is beyond thrilling to see it finally become law. It is fitting that on the 25th anniversary of the ADA, New York State now has all facets of the law in State statute as well."

The New York Association on Independent Living (NYAIL) is a statewide membership organization of Independent Living Centers (ILCs), community-based not-for-profit providers of advocacy, services and supports for New Yorkers with disabilities of all ages. ILCs are controlled by, and largely staffed by, people with disabilities. NYAIL strengthens local Independent Living Centers and is a leader in the civil rights movement for all people with disabilities.