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**Chartered by the Board
of Regents of the
University of the State of
New York as a Non-
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Education, Medical,
Social and Research
Needs.**

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MEMO IN SUPPORT June 11, 2009

A.2242-Schroeder/S.3159 Stachowski; An act to amend the education law, in relation to instruction on the history of people with disabilities

This bill would amend the education law to include the history of people with disabilities in the state's mandatory curriculum.

Among the list of mandatory subjects in school are patriotism, human rights, the Holocaust, and the mass starvation in Ireland. This bill adds the history of people with disabilities to that important list.

It is important for our youth to understand the history in order to appreciate how individuals with disabilities were once viewed and treated. It would provide students with the opportunity to learn how people with disabilities were instrumental in changing history, and how they became active participants in changing societal attitudes about their needs, desires, and capabilities. By teaching disability history in schools, we are taking the necessary steps to ensure that history is not repeated and that there continues to be movement towards an even more accessible society in future generations.

A learning disability is a neurobiological disorder, meaning there are differences in brain structure and/ or function in a person who has learning disabilities. These differences lead to difficulty in learning and often to difficulties in coping with the challenges and stresses of everyday life. One in seven New Yorkers has a Learning Disability.

The impact of learning disabilities on our society and culture is enormous. Over half of the detainees in juvenile detention facilities have a learning disability. Up to 60% of adolescents in treatment for substance abuse have learning disabilities. 48% of those with learning disabilities are out of the workforce or unemployed. 50% of females with learning disabilities will be mothers (many of them single) within 3-5 years of leaving high school. 44 percent of the TANF (welfare) population were found to have a learning disability. 31% of students with learning disabilities will be arrested 3-5 years out of high school.

It is important that students learn about the important contributions of persons with disabilities, and that we encourage our schools to promote a better understanding of how society can provide better avenues of support and services for all New Yorker's with disabilities.

The Learning Disabilities Association of New York State therefore supports this bill, and urges that it be enacted into law.