

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Contact: Gary L. Brown
609-784-2292
gary.brown@njcdd.org

Senate Majority Leader Teresa Ruiz, Assembly Majority Leader Lou Greenwald, Senator Anthony Bucco and Assemblywoman Aura Dunn to Serve as Co-Chairs of Historic Bipartisan Disability Caucus in New Jersey Legislature

TRENTON, NJ—The New Jersey Council on Developmental Disabilities (NJCDD), the lead advocacy organization supporting the New Jersey Legislative Disability Caucus, is pleased to announce that Senate Majority Leader Teresa Ruiz, Assembly Majority Leader Lou Greenwald, Senator Anthony Bucco and Assemblywoman Aura Dunn will serve as co-chairs of the bipartisan Disability Caucus for the 2022-2023 Legislative Session. All four lawmakers were founding members of the Caucus that launched last year.

The New Jersey Disability Caucus is a bipartisan forum within the New Jersey Legislature comprised of lawmakers committed to promoting inclusion by considering the impact on the disability community when shaping ALL public policies in the Garden State. The quarterly meetings of the Caucus aim to increase awareness and provide lawmakers and their staff with a greater understanding of the complexities of the disabilities service system and issues impacting individuals with disabilities and their families. Recordings of the meetings held to date can be viewed [here](#).

“This bipartisan caucus is an opportunity to further improve healthcare, education, transportation, housing and employment for New Jerseyans with disabilities. We will forever be grateful to Senate President Steve Sweeney for getting this historic Caucus off the ground despite the pandemic. We also appreciate Senator Ruiz, Assemblyman Greenwald, Senator Bucco and Assemblywoman Dunn for stepping up now and dedicating their leadership to moving the state closer to inclusion and equity for all,” said Mercedes Witowsky, Executive Director of NJCDD.

Approximately 25 percent of adults in New Jersey identify as having some type of disability. Despite progress after passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) 30 years ago, people with disabilities in New Jersey continue to seek opportunities to be included and represented in all aspects of life as an integral part of the fabric of our society. New Jersey is among just a handful of states that has a bipartisan forum within its Legislature dedicated to disability issues.

“As a strong advocate for educational equity, it is important that we are leaning into the unique needs of all of our students,” said Senate Majority Leader Teresa Ruiz (D-29). “I am excited to co-chair the disability caucus and continue to take part in the effort to improve the lives of our residents and learn how we can better serve everyone that calls New Jersey home.”

“I am proud to serve with my colleagues as co-chairs of this meaningful caucus and continue our work to ensure individuals with disabilities have a voice in all aspects of policy making. One in every 10 New Jersey residents lives with a disability, so it is incredibly important they are represented at all levels of government,” said Assembly Majority Leader Lou Greenwald (D-6)”

"I could not be prouder of having been named a Senate Co-Chair for this dedicated powerhouse team committed to bettering the lives of the more than one million New Jersey adults living with disabilities," Senator Anthony Bucco (R-25) said. "As this bipartisan caucus progresses into its second year, we share ambitious goals and high expectations and focus on providing the disability community a stronger voice in Trenton. There is much to be accomplished, and working together, there is much we will achieve."

"My entire career has been devoted to advocacy and breaking down barriers, and I am honored to carry those qualities into my new role as co-chair of the disability caucus," said Assemblywoman Aura Dunn (R-25). "With my fellow lawmakers and advocates, I look forward to finding bi-partisan solutions that will improve the lives of those with disabilities and their families. Giving this community a seat at the decision-making table and a voice in Trenton is key to shaping inclusive public policies that support, empower and uplift."

Legislative Disability Caucus Members

Senator Anthony M. Bucco
Senator Kristin M. Corrado
Senator Patrick J. Diegnan, Jr.
Senator Vin Gopal
Senator Linda R. Greenstein
Senator Fred H. Madden, Jr.
Senator Declan J. O'Scanlon, Jr.
Senator M. Teresa Ruiz
Senator Holly T. Schepisi
Senator Nicholas P. Scutari
Senator Troy Singleton
Senator Bob Smith
Senator Jean Stanfield
Senator Joseph F. Vitale
Senator Andrew Zwicker
Assemblyman Daniel R. Benson
Assemblyman Clinton Calabrese
Assemblywoman Annette Chaparro

Assemblyman Herb Conaway, Jr., M.D.
Assemblyman Ronald S. Dancer
Assemblywoman Aura K. Dunn
Assemblywoman Kimberly Eulner
Assemblyman Louis D. Greenwald
Assemblywoman Angelica M. Jimenez
Assemblywoman Pamela Lampitt
Assemblywoman Yvonne Lopez
Assemblywoman Nancy F. Munoz
Assemblywoman Carol A. Murphy
Assemblywoman Marilyn Piperno
Assemblywoman Annette Quijano
Assemblyman Gary S. Schaer
Assemblyman William W. Spearman
Assemblywoman Shanique Speight
Assemblywoman Britnee N. Timberlake
Assemblyman Brandon Umba
Assemblyman Anthony S. Verrelli

Supporting Agencies

New Jersey Council on Developmental Disabilities
ACCSES NJ
Advocates In Action
Alliance Center for Independence
ASAH *Serving the private special education community since 1974*
ASL Interpreter Referral Service, Inc.
Aspire Support Coordination, LLC
Autism New Jersey
Brain Injury Alliance
Coaching-Connections, LLC. Of Middlesex County
Collaborative Support Programs of New Jersey (CSPNJ)
Community Access Unlimited
Community Supports Network
Consistent Supports Coordination
DAWN Center for Independent Living
Devereux Advanced Behavioral Health – New Jersey
Disability Allies
Disability Rights New Jersey (DRNJ)

Easterseals New Jersey
Employment Horizons, Inc.
Families and Community Together (FACT)
Hearing Loss Assn of America
Heightened Independence and Progress Center for Independent Living (HIP)
Jewish Federations of New Jersey
Inroads to Opportunities
Laura Bishop Communications
Mental Health Association in New Jersey
Moceans Center for Independent Living
NAMI NJ
National Multiple Sclerosis Society
NJ Association of Centers for Independent Living (NJACIL)
New Jersey Association of Mental Health & Addiction Agencies, Inc. (NJAMHAA)
New Jersey Deaf Housing, Inc
New Jersey Disability Collective

NJ Association of Human Services Directors
NJ Joint Council on Special Services
Northeast ADA Center
New Jersey State Independent Living Council
Ombudsman for Individuals with Intellectual or
Developmental Disabilities and Their Families
Promise Day Habilitation
Progressive Center Mercer
SPAN Parent Advocacy Network

Special Child Health Services of Hunterdon County
Supportive Housing Association of New Jersey
The Alliance for the Betterment of Citizens with
Disabilities (ABCD)
The Arc of New Jersey
The Boggs Center on Developmental Disabilities, Rutgers
Robert Wood Johnson Medical School
The New Jersey Association of Community Providers
(NJACP)

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About the NJ Legislative Disability Caucus

The Caucus was formed December 1, 2020, and serves as a bipartisan forum within the New Jersey Legislature for lawmakers and their staff to consider the impact on the disability community when shaping ALL public policies in the Garden State. Participation in the Caucus is open to all legislators who agree to be champions for individuals with disabilities in New Jersey by meeting with them in their district offices; participate in the quarterly education forums; and promote policies to improve the lives of people with disabilities and their families. People with disabilities, their families and organizations that serve, support and advocate for people with disabilities in the Garden State serve as a resource for the NJ Legislative Disability Caucus.

About the NJCDD

The New Jersey Council on Developmental Disabilities (NJCDD) is a federally-mandated organization located in but not of the NJ Department of Human Services.

NJCDD works to ensure individuals with intellectual/developmental disabilities (I/DD) and their families, participate in the design of and have access to needed community services, individualized supports, and other forms of assistance that promote self-determination, independence, productivity, integration and inclusion in all facets of life through culturally competent programs.