

# New Jersey Legislative Disability Caucus

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## ***Members of the NJ Legislative Disability Caucus and Advocates Discuss Technology's Role in Enhancing Independent Living***

**Trenton, NJ** – Last week, the bipartisan New Jersey Legislative Disability Caucus hosted a virtual roundtable to explore how assistive technology and remote supports—from voice-activated systems and mobility aids to communication devices, wearable monitors, and AI tools—are transforming the lives of people with disabilities across the state.

The discussion, titled “*Using Technology to Enhance Independent Living: Breaking Barriers with Innovation*,” featured presentations from experts across New Jersey highlighting real-world applications of assistive technology. These speakers showcased how new technologies are helping individuals live more independently and safely, while also enabling caregivers and providers to deliver more efficient, person-centered services.

### **Highlights from the roundtable included:**

- **Mike Marotta**, Program Director of the [Richard West Assistive Technology Advocacy Center \(ATAC\)](#) at Disability Rights NJ, discussed the evolution and affordability of assistive technology. He emphasized the importance of getting the right technology in people's hands and mentioned the “try before you buy” technology loan program. Marotta also mentioned their partnership with Goodwill Home Medical, a provider of refurbished equipment. He encouraged legislators to reach out to his office for assistance in connecting constituents with technology resources.

- **Steve Hirsch**, Vice President of Information Technology at the [New Jersey Association of Mental Health and Addiction Agencies](#), highlighted the benefits of medication adherence technology, including programmable pill dispensers and mobile reminders. Hirsch described the Medherent medication management system by [Altruix](#), which increases independence and results in 90% medication adherence, 40% lower hospital and ER costs, and 25% fewer ER visits. He encouraged legislators to consider the impact of technology on medication administration, improved health, and greater independence.
- **Karen Lindgren**, Chief Clinical Officer, and **Brian Hancock**, Chief Program Officer, from [Bancroft](#) shared their organization's strategy to leverage technology to improve person-centered care. Bancroft has implemented smart home technologies, virtual reality, and AI to enhance independence and reduce medication errors. Specifically, Bancroft has seen increased engagement, mood, and physical activity since introducing robots and virtual reality. Bancroft plans to establish a smart home lab to allow individuals to test and evaluate technology before implementation. They also introduced self-advocate **Danny M.**, who shared his experience with technology at his apartment, including how it “made him feel more responsible.”
- **Susan Nasberg-Abrams**, Life Home Tech Program Manager, and **Randee Lesser**, Director of Quality Assurance for Technology, from the Jewish Service for the Developmentally Disabled ([JSDD](#)), described their individualized process for developing enabling technology integration plans. Success stories include increased privacy, self-answering doors, and safe cooking, leading to a new sense of pride and accomplishment. Challenges include funding, resistance from staff, and the need for continuous communication with guardians and loved ones.

**Caucus Co-Chair Assemblywoman Aura K. Dunn**, who led the discussion, reflected on a powerful presentation by self-advocate Danny M. “I so appreciate Danny sharing how smart home technology has reduced his need for staff support and increased his independence in his apartment—an inspiring reminder of why these conversations matter,” said Dunn. “As policymakers, we must balance innovation with accountability and ensure that human connection remains our top priority.”

**Mercedes Witowsky**, Executive Director of the [New Jersey Council on Developmental Disabilities \(NJCDD\)](#), the Caucus’s lead supporting agency, encouraged legislators to listen closely to the voices of individuals and families. “Technology connects people to family, friends, and vital information—it’s a key part of social, mental, and emotional health,” said Witowsky. “If becoming a ‘Technology First’ state helps us get there, then I’m all for it.”

To access the full recording and resource list from the July 22 roundtable, visit:

<https://tinyurl.com/4y5kfdsf>.

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### **About the New Jersey Legislative Disability Caucus**

*Formed in December 2020, the Caucus is 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. The Caucus is co-chaired by Senate Majority Leader Teresa Ruiz (D-29), Assembly Majority Leader Lou Greenwald (D-6), Senator Anthony Bucco (R-25) and Assemblywoman Aura Dunn (R-25). 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; participating in the quarterly education forums; and promoting 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. For more information about the Caucus and to get involved, visit <https://njcdd.org/legislative-disability-caucus/>.*