

DOUBLE GOOD NEWS

This past week has had good news from SDMNY and for our community on many fronts. We celebrate two in particular.

First, another SDMA signing, which is also the final one from our partnership with the Silberman School of Social Work at Hunter College. Although it took “longer than expected,” Decision-Maker Jermaine celebrated his signing saying that *“SDM is important because it helps me to be on my own.”* Jermaine is 24, lives in Manhattan, and is attending a GED program in Harlem. He loves sports, including basketball and football, but is especially passionate about wrestling, an interest he shared with Facilitator Professor Pat Gray. She reported how much she enjoyed working with Jermaine and praised SDM because *“it gives anyone who is living with a disability the ability to have their own voice.”*



SDMNY's Stephanie, Pat Gray, Jermaine, his mom and Supporter Naomi

Jermaine's mom and Supporter Naomi, who, coincidentally, works for OPWDD, agreed, pointing out that *“SDM allows others to have different options besides guardianship and not to take away choice.”* We couldn't have said it any better!

Congratulations to Jermaine, Naomi and Pat

We were also thrilled to hear that Governor Kathy Hochul has established a new Office of the Chief Disability Officer to advocate on behalf of persons with disabilities, and appointed long-time disability activist Kimberly T. Hill as the state's first Chief Disability Officer. At a press conference earlier this week, Governor Hochul said,

“It is critical that we prioritize the protection of our most vulnerable communities, and the new Office of the Chief Disability Officer will ensure we remain accountable to the pursuit of a more diverse, inclusive, and equitable New York.”

The Acting Commissioner of OPWDD, Kerri Neifeld applauded the appointment, stating that the new position will *“help ensure that people can live as independently as possible within the community of their choice fully supported to achieve their individual goals, and help break down silos and ensure people can access the supports they need.”*



Governor Hochul's press conference with Chief Disability Officer Kimberly Hill on the far right.

Having a high level office and disability advocate in the executive branch is surely a promising development for our community, and we hope and expect that it will include advocacy for SDM!

Thanks to Governor Hochul, and welcome to Chief Disability Officer Kimberly Hill