

CELEBRATING AN SDM CHAMPION'S CONGRESSIONAL VICTORY

For many reasons, SDMNY can neither lobby nor take positions in political campaigns. But there is nothing to prevent us from celebrating this week's victory in the 22nd Congressional District (Syracuse area) by one of the greatest champions in New York for people with disabilities, and especially for SDM, State Senator John Mannion. We do so with great enthusiasm and whole heartedly.



Congressmember-elect John Mannion

Since his election to the State Senate in 2020 after 23 years as a public school teacher, Senator Mannion, the dad of a child with autism, has been a champion for people with disabilities and an advocate for protecting their rights and improving their lives. As Chair of the Senate Disabilities Committee he has overseen four consecutive cost-of-living-adjustment pay increases for Direct Care Professionals (DSPs) and sponsored a number of disability related bills including promoting employment of people with disabilities by the state and state contractors, assuring ADA accommodations in emergency rooms, promoting a "Neurodiversity Training Pledge" by employers, and proposing a blue ribbon commission on "the future of New York state's service delivery system for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities." Recently, he sponsored a bill that would enable people with disabilities to utilize the accommodations necessary to enable them to vote that we wrote about last week, (Good News, 11/01/24) without having to disclose private information about their disabilities to poll workers. (That bill, S9794, passed the Senate and is now in the Assembly)



Governor Hochul signs the SDMA law with lead sponsor Senator John Mannion, fourth from right

But for us at SDMNY and our wider community, one of Senator Mannion's many accomplishments stands out—his sponsorship and unwavering support for New York's ground-breaking SDM and SDMA statute, Article 82 of the Mental Hygiene Law. From the time OPWDD first introduced the bill in 2021, initial passage in the Senate during that legislative session, unanimous re-passage in 2022, introduction and Assembly passage, and Governor Hochul's signature in July that year (Good News, 7/29/22) Senator Mannion advocated tirelessly and persuasively for the rights of person with I/DD to make their own decisions, and for SDM facilitation of SDMAs to make those decisions legally recognized. It is more than an understatement to say that we couldn't have done it without him!

We are thrilled that the 22nd District, New York and the larger disability community will have such a committed and effective advocate in Washington. We know that, for Senator, soon- to-be Congress Member Mannion, disability rights are human rights, a position he embraced in many years of leadership in his union, NYSUT. We could not be prouder.

**CONGRATULATIONS AND GODSPEED TO OUR FRIEND,
CONGRESSMEMBER-ELECT JOHN MANNION!**