



SERVICES FOR INDEPENDENT LIVING, INC.

Testimony: Katherine Foley

In Support of SCR 18

April 9, 2018

To Whom It May Concern:

My name is Katherine Foley and I am writing in support of SCR 18 which was proposed to encourage Congress to amend the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) to adopt a new version of the International Symbol of Accessibility.

Currently, the ADA utilizes an outdated traditional symbol of an individual sitting motionless and inactive in a stationary wheelchair. The proposed new symbol will change the current International Symbol of Accessibility ("disability symbol") to a more dynamic and modern design of a person in a wheelchair, moving in forward motion and engaging with society. It is my understanding that the states of New York and Connecticut have already passed legislation allowing for use of the alternative icon. While this action may seem a small change to some, it speaks volumes in addressing attitudinal barriers so often faced by persons with disabilities, especially persons who use wheelchairs.

As a Center for Independent Living, we work to help persons of all ages and disability types to remain in and participate in their communities of choice. We believe that disability is a natural part of life's journey, no matter whether one is born with a disability or one acquires a disability later in life. Indeed, the last U.S. Census showed us that 20% of the population were individuals with disabilities.

For so long, this population has been stigmatized as one of needing help to function. Yes, some do, but many do not. The societal attitude of "can't do" rather than "can do" is one of greatest barriers faced by the disability community. It is often assumed by the community, professionals, family and eventually the person themselves, that the individual is helpless and unable to contribute to the community. This can't be further from the truth!

We see the new symbol of accessibility as a focus on the positive and what can be done, rather than the more institutional symbol of nearly fifty years that is currently being used. It is our belief that the new design will eventually become the symbol that is consistently used throughout our nation and fully adopted by the U.S. Access Board, by the U.S. Department of Justice and by the U.S. Department of Transportation. We applaud Senator Yuko and others who have signed onto this bill for their foresight and willingness to send a message of "moving forward" to the disability community, those they love and work with, and the community in general.

Thank you for the opportunity to make these comments.

Katherine Foley, Ex. Director