



DISABILITY AND COMMUNICATION ACCESS BOARD

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TESTIMONY TO THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY AND GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS

Senate Bill 898, Senate Draft 1 – Relating to Civil Defense

The Disability and Communication Access Board is a statewide Board with seventeen (17) members appointed by the Governor, thirteen (13) of whom are persons with disabilities or family members. The Board's mission is to advocate and promote full inclusion, independence, equal access, and quality of life for persons with disabilities in society. This testimony represents a position voted upon by the Legislative Committee of the Board.

The Disability and Communication Access Board supports Senate Bill 898, Senate Draft 1 which would enhance the State's ability to provide more spaces to shelter the community by exempting civil liability for care homes and schools during an officially designated emergency. This will permit the use of the private property for sheltering persons during disasters or emergencies.

As the staff agency to the Working Group that prepared the "2008 Interagency Action Plan for the Emergency Preparedness of People with Disabilities and Special Health Needs" we are acutely aware of the shortage of community sites where people can be sheltered. The shortage is acute for the population as a whole and even more difficult for people with disabilities due to accessibility concerns. Hospitals, community-based care homes, health care agencies, day care, and educational institutions are already places of public accommodation under the Americans with Disabilities Act that specifically have served people with disabilities. Therefore, they are excellent locations to shelter during an emergency. This bill would place those facilities in the same category as hotels with respect to release of liability.

We encourage your passage of this bill.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on this important matter.

Respectfully submitted,

CHARLES W. FLEMING
Chairperson

FRANCINE WAI
Executive Director