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Memo of Support 734-A

Urging Hochul to sign S.8415 (Salazar)/A.8871 (Dilan)

The Center for Independence of the Disabled, New York (CIDNY) is a nonprofit organization founded in 1978. We are part of the Independent Living Centers movement: a national network of grassroots and community-based organizations that enhance opportunities for all people with disabilities to direct their own lives. Our mission is to ensure full integration, independence, and equal opportunity for all people with disabilities by removing barriers to the social, economic, cultural, and civic life of the community.

In coalition with Katal Center and numerous organizations that advocate for people with mental disabilities, CIDNY supports S.8415 (Salazar)/A.8871 (Dilan), which consists of ten prison oversight and accountability reforms including overhauling the State Commission of Correction. We also support Resolution 734-A which urges Governor Hochul to immediately sign this Corrections Oversight Omnibus bill into law.

When a person is incarcerated in New York, the conditions of confinement must have basic constitutional requirements. But across the state – from Buffalo to New York City, from Green County to Suffolk County – many jails and prisons are plagued by human rights abuses and routine constitutional violations. The horrific killings of Robert Brooks and Messiah Nantwi at Marcy and Mid-State Correctional Facilities highlight the deadly conditions incarcerated people face in state prisons.

Local jails across New York are also sites of terrible conditions, gross mismanagement, and extreme violence. In New York City, the Rikers Island jail complex has a long and well-documented history of torture, abuse, violence, and a lack of safety for both incarcerated people and staff. The jails in Erie, Nassau, Albany, Greene, Dutchess, and Onondaga counties, and many others, consistently put incarcerated people at grave risk of harm.

CIDNY is ready to work with the city council and the State help implement S.8415. This bill which is related to correctional services in the state of New York, requires the timely disclosure of video footage related to the death of incarcerated individuals to the attorney general's office of special investigations (Part A). The bill also requires

institutions and local correctional facilities to adhere to certain standards regarding the camera coverage of incarcerated individuals and detainees, and access to such camera recordings (Part B). It also provides notice of the death of an incarcerated individual occurring in the custody of the department of corrections and community supervision.

The SCOC is an oversight commission that has been historically derelict in its duties. S.8415 (Salazar)/A.8871 (Dilan) is an important step to bring greater oversight and accountability into New York's jails and prisons. That is why CIDNY supports the bill and urges the governor to sign it. We thank the city council specially CM Gale Brewer for passing this 734A and urging the governor to sign Oversight Omnibus bill (S8415). This testimony is approved by Dr. Sharon McLennon Wier, Executive Director of CIDNY.

Thank you,

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