



Media contact: Stephanie Ramirez, sramirez@grouppgordon.com, W: (212) 784-5704, C: (917) 725-1468
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Independence Care System and New York Lawyers for the Public Interest Congratulate City Council for Supporting Accessible Care for People with Disabilities in HHC Facilities

In the Wake of a Report and Oversight Hearing, City Council Provides \$5 Million to Fund Accessibility for People with Disabilities within HHC Facilities

New York, NY, June 27, 2013 – Independence Care System (ICS) and New York Lawyers for the Public Interest (NYLPI) applaud the New York City Council for supporting accessible care for people with disabilities in the Health and Hospital Corporation’s (HHC) facilities. The City Council agreed to provide New York City’s public hospitals \$2.5 million over the 2013-2014 fiscal year and \$2.5 million over the 2014-2015 fiscal year in support of HHC’s ongoing efforts to provide equal and accessible care to people with disabilities. The funding will help HHC to provide at least one accessible exam room and one accessible bathroom in the women’s centers of each of HHC’s eleven acute care facilities and six diagnostic and treatment centers. The funding will also help HHC to provide at least one accessible bathroom and accessible equipment within the radiology area of each its facilities.

All New York City hospitals are required to ensure accessibility for their patients and HHC facilities have an especially critical role to play. These changes will increase the quality and availability of care for over 675,000 adult New Yorkers with disabilities who are uninsured or publically insured and who disproportionately rely on the City’s public health system.

“I want to thank New York Lawyers for the Public Interest and Independence Care System for their work getting Council Woman Julissa Ferreras, Chair of the Women’s Issues Committee and I, focused on the challenges women with mobility impairments face when seeking care in the Health and Hospitals Corporation Women’s Health clinics. I want to especially thank Council Speaker Christine Quinn,” said Council Woman Maria del Carmen Arroyo. “Without her support, this initiative and funding would not have been possible.”

“People with disabilities are entitled to access the basic but essential health care services that are routinely available to others without disabilities. HHC’s efforts toward increasing accessibility and the City Council’s funding to help make it happen are important first steps toward ensuring all people with disabilities have equal access to our City’s public hospitals,” said Mindy Friedman, Staff Attorney for the Disability Justice Program at New York Lawyers for the Public Interest. “We thank Speaker Quinn, Council Member Arroyo, Council Member Ferreras, and the City Council for supporting these critical accessibility improvements.”

Last October, the City Council held an oversight hearing regarding the accessibility of health care at HHC facilities in conjunction with the release of a report by Independence Care System and New York Lawyers for the Public Interest entitled “[Breaking Down Barriers, Breaking the Silence: Making Health Care Accessible for Women with Disabilities](#)”. The report revealed that medical facilities across New York City provide unequal and inaccessible care for people with disabilities, violating their civil rights under federal, state, and local laws. Such barriers to health care disproportionately affect women with disabilities. These barriers can lead to grave consequences, including delayed or missed diagnoses of breast or cervical cancers. The report called upon HHC to increase accessibility at all of their medical

facilities and encouraged the New York City Council to provide funding to HHC in order to support these efforts.

Breaking Down Barriers highlights an award-winning advocacy project, the Women's Health Access Program, developed by Independence Care System and implemented in four medical facilities, including two HHC facilities. That program has transformed previously inaccessible women's health services, including OB/GYN and cancer screening services, through staff training and accessible equipment. These services are now available to all women with physical disabilities who use those facilities. "We are heartened to hear about this significant funding from the City Council to HHC, which represents the first step in enabling HHC facilities to become accessible to the most underserved people with disabilities in New York City," says Marilyn Saviola, ICS Vice President for Advocacy and the Women's Health Access Program. "We have been privileged to work with the devoted staff at Morrisania Diagnostic and Treatment Center and Woodhull Hospital on improving the accessibility of their women's health services, and we look forward to working with the dedicated people at other facilities throughout the municipal system toward this same goal."

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About Independence Care System

Operating a nonprofit Medicaid managed long-term care program in New York City, Independence Care System was specifically designed to assist adults with physical disabilities to live independently and participate fully in community life. Serving Brooklyn, the Bronx, Manhattan and Queens, ICS has nearly 5,000 members; all are low-income, 70% are women, and 82% are Hispanic or African American. ICS's Women's Health Access Program won Hunter College's 2013 Joan H. Tisch Community Health Prize and is a past "Grantee of the Year" of the NYC Affiliate of Susan G. Komen for the Cure®. For more, go to www.icsny.org.

About New York Lawyers for the Public Interest

New York Lawyers for the Public Interest (NYLPI) advances equality and civil rights, with a focus on health justice, disability rights and environmental justice, through the power of community lawyering and partnerships with the private bar. Through community lawyering, NYLPI puts its legal, policy and community organizing expertise at the service of New York City communities and individuals. NYLPI's partnership with the private bar strengthens its advocacy and connects community groups and non-profits with critical legal assistance. NYLPI is the recipient of the 2010 New York Times Awards for Nonprofit Excellence.