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Center for Independence of the Disabled, NY

Media Statement from Center for Independence of the Disabled, New York Regarding Federal Court's Decision That New York City Fails to Address Needs of Disabled in Emergency Planning

NEW YORK, NY – November 7, 2013 – Susan Dooha, Executive Director of The Center for Independence of the Disabled, New York (CIDNY), a plaintiff in the case, today issued a statement following the Honorable Judge Jesse Furman's decision that New York City fails to address the needs of people with disabilities in emergency planning:

"We are proud of the Court's decision in this critical civil rights matter.

For over a decade, we have warned the City about its failure to adequately plan for people with disabilities in emergencies. Today's decision will put the City on the road to ending the needless suffering of New Yorkers with disabilities during disasters.

The court clearly concludes that the City failed to provide for high-rise evacuation, accessible transportation, for architecturally and programmatically accessible shelters, canvassing, accessible communications during recovery, outreach and education regarding personal emergency preparedness, and lacks plans for getting people the information they need.

Representatives from CIDNY were out the day before and the days after Sandy hit checking on shelters, trying to reach out to people with disabilities in the affected areas and trying to connect people with disabilities with help. CIDNY found shelters with locked doors at ramps, temporary ramps that would be dangerous for people with disabilities; and shelter staff that were not trained or ready to accommodate the needs of people with disabilities – no refrigeration for medications; no way to provide special diet needs and no accessible sleeping cots. In many cases, bathrooms were inaccessible for those who use wheelchairs.

We welcome the U.S. Department of Justice as a partner in the remedy phase. We're ready to continue our work; we hope the City is ready to do the large scale change that needs to be done to plan for *all* New Yorkers. We look forward to speaking with the incoming Mayoral team about ways to improve compliance with federal civil rights law.

CIDNY applauds Judge Furman's decision and looks forward to working with the city to ensure the safety and security of all New York City's residents."

About The Center for Independence of the Disabled, New York (CIDNY)

The Independence of the Disabled, New York (CIDNY) is the leading voice of people with disabilities in New York City. An independent living center, CIDNY's goal 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. www.cidny.org

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