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Mayor's Office for People with Disabilities Spreads Awareness of Impacts of Climate Change on People with Disabilities

Along with agency partners, elected officials, disability advocates and allies, MOPD marched and rolled to call attention to impacts of climate change on the disability community.

New York—The New York City Mayor's Office for People with Disabilities, NYC Emergency Management, disability advocates, elected officials, and allies today walked and rolled alongside [Canada To Key West](#) supporters from the High Line to the Oculus at the World Trade Center in order to highlight the effects of climate change on people with disabilities.

As a result of climate change, extreme weather events including hurricanes, severe rainstorms, and heat waves are becoming more frequent and more severe. It is critical that emergency preparedness efforts account for the needs of everyone, including the estimated one billion people around the world who live with self-disclosed disabilities. The de Blasio Administration has taken steps in expanding this preparedness by enhancing our [Advance Warning System](#) messaging, making accessibility enhancements on our [Hurricane Zone Map](#) and continually expanding [Ready New York](#) for Disability Access & Functional Needs populations.

At the same time, the de Blasio Administration has taken bold action to address the causes of climate change with [NYC's Green New Deal](#), including ending the City's reliance on single-use plastic foodware in [an inclusive way](#), investing in renewable energy sources, and more. In April 2019, the de Blasio Administration and the City Council passed the landmark Climate Mobilization Act, which will dramatically reduce emissions from existing buildings and requires all new buildings to install solar panels, green roofs, or a combination of the two.

"As society continues to respond to the weather events and other emergencies caused by climate change, we must include the needs of people with disabilities," said **MOPD Commissioner Victor Calise**. "New York City has led the way by working with the disability community to ensure that our emergency preparedness and sustainability efforts have put accessibility at the forefront. MOPD is proud to march and roll to raise

awareness about climate change's impact on the disability community and we look forward to continuing to work with our agency partners, elected officials, and advocates to further increase accessibility of all City initiatives.”

“We are now in peak hurricane season, and it is important that every New Yorker makes a plan that includes his or her unique needs,” said **NYC Emergency Management Commissioner Deanne Criswell**. “It is critical that all planning includes the needs of New Yorkers with disabilities. If you are not sure where to start, check out the [Ready New York: My Emergency Plan](#) to make sure you're prepared for hurricanes and other extreme weather.”

“Here in New York City, we recognize our climate crisis for what it is - an emergency - and also that what matters most is not words, but inclusive actions,” said **Daniel Zarrilli, NYC's Chief Climate Policy Advisor and OneNYC Director**. “With OneNYC 2050, we are demonstrating to the world what a Green New Deal looks like in practice. Not only are we taking on the fossil fuel industry and getting our emissions to net zero, but we are serving as a model for progressive change that is both impactful and equitable for all New Yorkers.”

“Extreme weather events can pose unique challenges to people with disabilities,” said **Jainey Bavishi, Director of the Mayor's Office of Resiliency**. “Equity is at the heart of our climate change adaptation strategy, and we are committed to meeting the needs of all New Yorkers as we build a stronger and more resilient future.”

The City is proud to partner with [Canada To Key West](#) and its founders, Drs. Marcalee and Craig Alexander, to raise awareness of climate change and its specific impacts on the disability community. Along the 2,500-mile journey that began on June 21st, the Drs. have continually engaged with people with disabilities and academic partners about the need for more effective mechanisms and planning in emergencies that include the disability community.

"Climate change is already adversely impacting the quality of lives with persons with disabilities. As a physician, my goal is to help people maximize wellness and quality of life. This is such an important message, I left my full time practice to raise awareness about climate change and disability,” said **Dr. Marcalee Alexander, founder of Canada to Key West**. “A goal of Canada to Key West is to launch Day for Tomorrow 9/22/19, as a parallel to Earth Day to call even further attention to the impact of climate change on people with disabilities. Canada to Key West is grateful to the City of New York for its partnership in amplifying this important message to ensure that all emergency preparedness and efforts to combat climate change includes the needs of the disability community.”

The City prioritizes combatting the existential threat of climate change in an inclusive and accessible way by providing people with disabilities with the tools they need to remain safe and secure during extreme weather events caused by climate change as well as other emergency situations.

“The continued threats of climate change cause issues for all New Yorkers and especially people with disabilities. I am proud to join Commissioner Calise and MOPD to raise awareness of this important issue,” said **Council Member Diana Ayala, Chair of the Committee on Mental Health, Disabilities, and Addiction**. “It is imperative that the City’s preparedness and sustainability efforts include the needs of the disability community and I look forward to working with my Council colleagues and the Administration to make New York even more accessible.”

"As we continue to combat the existential threats posed by climate change, it is incredibly important that emergency preparedness and sustainability initiatives address the needs of all New Yorkers, including those with disabilities," said **Council Member Helen Rosenthal (District 6)**. "I am proud to partner with Commissioner Calise and MOPD on today's march to raise awareness about the importance of including the disability community in not only our response to climate change but indeed all of the City's programs and services."

"Climate change continues to threaten all of us with possible catastrophic changes to our local weather and living conditions," said **Council Member Ben Kallos**. "As a City that prides itself on inclusivity, we must ensure that when we plan for the future we think of the nearly 1 million New Yorkers who identify as having a disability. I am thankful to Mayor de Blasio for having the foresight to include the Mayors Office of People with Disabilities in planning for the future."

“United Spinal Association is proud to be associated with Drs. Marcalee and Craig Alexander’s Canada to Key West awareness-raising trek,” said **James Weisman, President/CEO, United Spinal Association**. “It is fundamental to the safety and well-being of people with disabilities that emergency preparation agencies of government plan for their inclusion in efforts to protect the public. Moreover, raising awareness of the threat climate change poses to everyone is fundamental if we are to protect our citizens.”

“People with disabilities have been drastically overlooked when it comes to emergency preparedness and there hasn’t been attention given to how climate change impacts emergency planning for everyone especially individuals with disabilities,” said **Brett L. Eisenberg, Executive Director of Bronx Independent Living Services**. “We commend MOPD for bringing such awareness to the issue and our agency looks

forward to working with the city on raising further awareness of these very important issues.”

“We cannot talk about climate change without considering the unique challenges it presents for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities,” said **George Contos, CEO of YAI**. “People with disabilities are more vulnerable to natural disasters, infectious diseases, and extreme heat. By including them in these conversations from the start, the Mayor’s Office of People with Disabilities has taken a major step in protecting the rights of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities through this great crisis of our time.”

"People with disabilities face lack of accessibility, health needs, and disproportionate rates of poverty, making us at risk from climate change and related disasters," said **Susan Dooha, Executive Director, Center for Independence of the Disabled, NY**. "We need a plan in place that protects us during disasters and we hope to work with the de Blasio Administration to make sure the needs of people with disabilities are met."

“Climate change puts our community at extraordinary risk," said **Joseph G. Rappaport, Executive Director of the Brooklyn Center for Independence of the Disabled**. "In fact, after Hurricane Sandy, BCID and other disability groups sued the Bloomberg Administration because of how poorly it handled emergency evacuation. Since then, the City has spent considerable resources preparing for the next climate-related disaster. We applaud its participation in the Canada to Key West walk."

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