



**TO:** The Honorable Members of the Board of Regents

**FROM:** Ceylane Meyers-Ruff *Ceylane Meyers-Ruff*

**SUBJECT:** Appointments to the New York State Independent Living Council, Inc.

**DATE:** December 4, 2025

**AUTHORIZATION(S):** *[Signature]*

**SUMMARY**

**Issue for Decision (Consent)**

Should the Board of Regents approve the proposed appointments of members to the New York State Independent Living Council, Inc. (NYSILC)?

**Reason(s) for Consideration**

The 1992 Amendments to the Rehabilitation Act require the Board of Regents to appoint members to the New York State Independent Living Council, Inc.

**Proposed Handling**

This issue will come before the Full Board for action at its December 2025 meeting.

**Procedural History**

Each year, as vacancies occur on the NYSILC, the Board of Regents approves recommendations to fill such vacancies.

**Background Information**

Information on the proposed appointees (Attachment A) and a list of the entire NYSILC (Attachment B) are attached.

## **Related Regents Items**

[January 2025: Appointments to the New York State Independent Living Council, Inc.](https://www.regents.nysed.gov/sites/regents/files/125brca1.pdf)  
(<https://www.regents.nysed.gov/sites/regents/files/125brca1.pdf>)

## **Recommendation**

It is recommended that the Board of Regents take the following action:

VOTED: That the Board of Regents approve the appointments of Richard Bedard, Jocelyn Blanchard, and Jose Hernandez to the New York State Independent Living Council for a three-year term beginning January 1, 2026, and ending December 31, 2028.

VOTED: That the Board of Regents approve the reappointments of Rasheta Bunting, Barbara Goldstein, Lindsay Miller, and Sonam Ben Willow to the New York State Independent Living Council for a three-year term beginning January 1, 2026, and ending December 31, 2028.

## **Timetable for Implementation**

Upon approval by the Regents of the recommended candidate, the appointments and reappointments will be effective January 1, 2026.

**New York State Independent Living Council, Inc.  
(New Appointments and Reappointments for the term January 1, 2026, to  
December 31, 2028)**

The Office of Special Education and ACCES (OSEA) is recommending three new appointments resulting from three members terming off the council, as well as four reappointments of existing members.

**Jose Hernandez**

- Over a decade of experience advocating for individuals with disabilities at local, state, and federal levels, leading grassroots efforts, representing organizations at conferences, and managing advocacy campaigns.
- Background includes collaborating on policy, testifying at events, and ensuring equity in areas such as paratransit and mass transit systems.

**Jocelyn Blanchard**

- Over 18 years of experience in human services, including non-profit agency administration, non-profit consumer services administration, state and federal program management, medical insurance program management, long-term care management, poverty prevention and intervention, human services staff training and oversight, and community presentations.
- Employment experience as a Dialysis Social Worker, Clinician, Clinical Evaluator, Fiscal Intermediary Coordinator, Outreach Coordinator, Regional Housing Education Project Specialist, Direct Service Professional, and Tutor.

**Richard Bedard**

- Extensive clinical and research experience in the areas of Autism Spectrum Disorders, psychological therapies, and evaluations.
- A member of various committees that support individuals with disabilities, including the Diversity and Inclusion Committee at Adelphi University, the Long Island Chapter of the Advocacy Transportation Committee, and a member of the Southampton Fresh Air Home Advisory Board.

**Rasheta Bunting**

- Over 27 years of experience interacting with young people with disabilities as a special education teacher and as the state coordinator for a national program that provides braille and non-visual training to blind/low vision children.
- Has extensive networking and outreach experience within her community as a board member of Mott Haven and Highbridge, both underserved neighborhoods in the Bronx.
- Is a state and local board member of the National Federation of the Blind, where she advocates and fights for the rights of blind/low vision people.

**Lindsay Miller**

- Over 17 years of experience as the Executive Director of New York Association on Independent Living (NYAIL), providing financial and programmatic oversight for a statewide membership association of 30 Independent Living Centers.
- Develops NYAIL's annual Disability Priority Agenda (DPA) legislative and budget priorities in conjunction with NYAIL's public policy subcommittees for election reform, employment, health/long-term care, housing, inclusive education, and transportation

**Sonam Ben Willow**

- Advises and advocates for individuals with disabilities to successfully receive SSI/SSDI and other health insurances.
- Over 18 years of experience as a School-to-Work Transition Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor (VRC), guiding individuals in the development of their Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE).

**Barbara Goldstein**

- Over 23 years of experience as an educator in a variety of capacities, including Special Education Teacher and Director, Elementary School Principal, and Transition Services Specialist.
- Strong ability to read and evaluate research, chair meetings, develop budgets, and write grants.

**New York State Independent Living Council, Inc.  
(Term Expirations)**

**Representatives from the Centers for Independent Living**

2028 Sonam Willow, Schenectady, NY

2026 Jennifer Shippee, Lake George, NY

2026 Susan Ruff, Binghamton, NY

**Advocate for Individuals with Disabilities**

2027 Michael Gilberg Esq, Granite Springs, NY

2027 Beata Karpinska-Prehn, Syracuse, NY

2026 Lisa Ackerman-Todt, Schenectady, NY

2026 Isabelle Alexander-Klaboe, Utica, NY

**Representatives of Service Organizations for Individuals with Disabilities**

2028 Rasheta Bunting, Brooklyn, NY

2028 Lindsay Miller, Albany, NY

2027 Keith Gurgui, Lake Katrine, NY

2026 Leanna Leroy, Irving, NY

2026 Brodie Enoch, New York, NY

2026 Marcus Johnson, New York, NY

**Parent/Guardian of an Individual with a Disability**

2026 Michele Juda, Ballston Spa, NY

**CIL Representative**

2027 Yaw Appiadu, Peekskill NY

**Other Appropriate Individuals**

2028 Jose Hernandez, Bronx, NY,

2028 Jocelyn Blanchard, Rome, NY

2028 Richard Bedard, Hempstead, NY

2028 Barbara Goldstein, Delmar, NY

2026 Naomi Jones, New York, NY

2026 Louis A Paniccioli, Staten Island, NY

2026 Stephanie Woodward, Rochester, NY

**American Indian/Indigenous Person Representative**

2026 Jacqueline John, Gowanda, NY

**Ex Officio (DSE)**

2026 Joseph Tedesco - Manager, Independent Living Unit, New York State Education Department, ACCES-VR, Albany, NY