

Assembly Resolution No. 2426

BY: M. of A. Lupardo

CONGRATULATING Maria Dibble upon the occasion of her retirement after 40 years of devoted service as Executive Director of the Southern Tier Independence Center

WHEREAS, Individuals and organizations devoted to improving the quality of life for others, enabling them to build lives of dignity and self-worth are deserving of the highest praise and recognition; and

WHEREAS, From time to time, society calls upon these individuals and organizations to be recognized for the significance of their contributions and efforts to assist others in developing the skills necessary to be successful, productive citizens; and

WHEREAS, This Legislative Body is justly proud to congratulate Maria Dibble upon the occasion of her retirement after 40 years of devoted service to the Southern Tier Independence Center; and

WHEREAS, With a steadfast and unwavering commitment to serving individuals with disabilities, Maria Dibble co-founded the Southern Tier Independence Center (STIC) with Frank Pennisi in 1983; and

WHEREAS, Under the able leadership of Maria Dibble, STIC, an Independent Living Center serving children and adults with all types of disabilities, promotes the independence, integration, and inclusion of people with disabilities in all aspects of community life including employment, recreation, housing, education, volunteering, and civil responsibilities; and

WHEREAS, STIC also provides support, consultation, training and services to families, businesses, agencies, and others within the local community; and

WHEREAS, Completely blind from birth, Maria Dibble has experienced the discrimination and false assumptions people make when meeting a person with a disability, underestimating what they can do, or even completely dismissing it; nevertheless, she was integrated into regular schools as a child, and is a graduate of Binghamton University; and

WHEREAS, This extraordinary woman understands the issues faced by children and their families; she vowed as a teen to somehow have an impact on the lives of people with disabilities, by changing attitudes, and working to remove barriers to inclusion and acceptance; and

WHEREAS, STIC has helped her to achieve these goals; since its inception, this vital organization has grown from a grant of \$100,000 and four staff, to a budget of \$17 million and approximately 750 employees, all dedicated to the independence of people with disabilities, and advocating for their civil and economic rights; and

WHEREAS, Maria Dibble was on the front lines in Washington during the battle for passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA); she took momentum from the ADA's passage and used it to advance key components of the Independent Living mission, including deinstitutionalization, supported employment, and Consumer Directed Personal Assistance (CDPA); and

WHEREAS, Furthermore, she was a leader in the Association on Independent Living, and was appointed to the New York State Independent Living Council (NYSILC) board of directors and served as chair in the early 2000s; and

WHEREAS, In 2004, after realizing a lack of services for people who have both mental health challenges and developmental disabilities, Maria Dibble mobilized the resources of STIC to create the Children's Mental Health Task Force and address this gap in services by fostering collaboration among voluntary and government agencies, schools, and care providers; and

WHEREAS, Under her direction, the task force created action steps for the near and long-term future, and generated a dozen detailed recommendations to address the issue; among Maria's many accomplishments, this one stands out, truly demonstrating the reach of her efforts, illustrating her willingness to tackle complex and challenging issues, and proving her ability to bring a diverse group together for a common purpose; and

WHEREAS, Widely respected for her advocacy work, Maria Dibble was inducted into the New York State Disability Rights Hall of Fame in 2019; and

WHEREAS, Not only has Maria Dibble brought about change locally, statewide, and nationally, she has also inspired and mentored several generations of advocates, each of whom have gone on to work for change and inspire others to do the same; this ripple effect ensures individuals with disabilities in Broome County and beyond will feel the impact of Maria's work for generations to come; and

WHEREAS, Rare indeed is the occurrence of such a compassionate blending of strength, leadership, intellect, and commitment as that demonstrated by Maria Dibble over a lifetime of sacrifice and dedication to others; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That this Legislative Body pause in its deliberations to congratulate Maria Dibble upon the occasion of her retirement, and to wish her well in all her future endeavors; and be it further

RESOLVED, That a copy of this Resolution, suitably engrossed, be transmitted to Maria Dibble.