Senate Resolution No. 1476

BY: Senator MARTINS

MEMORIALIZING Governor Kathy Hochul to proclaim March 17, 2026, as Profound Autism Awareness Day in the State of New York

WHEREAS, It is the custom of this Legislative Body to recognize official days that are set aside to increase awareness of serious issues that affect the lives of citizens of New York State; and

WHEREAS, Attendant to such concern, and fully in accord with its long-standing traditions, this Legislative Body is justly proud to memorialize Governor Kathy Hochul to proclaim March 17, 2026, as Profound Autism Awareness Day in the State of New York; and

WHEREAS, The recognition of Profound Autism Awareness Day provides an opportunity to increase awareness and further educate the public about autism and various issues of importance within the autism community; and

WHEREAS, According to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), 1 in 36 children in the United States, or approximately 2.8% of children, are diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder (ASD); and

WHEREAS, Autism is defined by a certain set of behaviors and is a spectrum disorder that affects individuals differently and to varying degrees; and

WHEREAS, The CDC reports that 26.7% of individuals diagnosed with ASD have profound autism, which is characterized by significant intellectual disability, limited communication abilities, and extensive support needs; this means that approximately 1 in 4 children with autism have profound autism; and

WHEREAS, Individuals with profound autism often face unique challenges, including higher rates of self-injurious behaviors, seizure disorders, and lower adaptive functioning, necessitating specialized services and interventions; and

WHEREAS, Between 2015 and 2020, the number of individuals served by the New York State Office for People With Developmental Disabilities (OPWDD) with a primary diagnosis of autism increased from 20,789 to 27,434, reflecting a growing need for awareness and resources within our state; and

WHEREAS, Profound autism is often a disorder with significant unmet patient needs and is a complex developmental disability that typically appears during the first three years of life and can affect a person's ability to communicate and interact with others; and

WHEREAS, While the entire spectrum deserves recognition and support, profound autism is a term intended to provide clarification about

autistic people who require 24/7 care from adult caregivers throughout their lives and present with an IQ below 50; these individuals also have minimal or no language; and

WHEREAS, People with profound autism consistently experience unique, devastating, and often unseen challenges that require solutions, not only for them but for their caregivers; and

WHEREAS, Parents tend to overlook the early signs of autism spectrum disorders, assuming their child is just going through a phase or having an off day; and

WHEREAS, It is important for parents to differentiate these assumptions from the symptoms, which can present in many different forms; autism is a spectrum disorder, meaning there can be great variation in the way it affects people; each child on the autism spectrum possesses unique abilities, symptoms, and challenges; and

WHEREAS, Many children on the autism spectrum share common core symptoms, including impaired social interactions such as reluctance to join group activities at school, a lack of awareness of the needs of others, and an inability to understand humor; impaired communication, such as delays in language development, unusual repetition of words and phrases spoken by others or on television, or significant difficulty sustaining a conversation; and restricted interests, repetitive behaviors, and stereotyped mannerisms, such as clapping, finger flicking, rocking, dipping, and swaying, as well as fascination with parts of objects or preoccupation with one narrow interest, such as dates or numbers; and

WHEREAS, While medications are available for some common behavioral symptoms like irritability or anxiety, there are no FDA-approved drugs to treat any of the core symptoms of these conditions; and that require solutions, not only for them but for their caregivers; and

WHEREAS, It is imperative that there be greater public awareness surrounding profound autism, and more must be done to increase productive activity at the local, state, and national levels to promote understanding, acceptance, and support for individuals with profound autism and their families, as well as encourage the development of tailored programs and services to meet their specific needs; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That this Legislative Body pause in its deliberations to memorialize Governor Kathy Hochul to proclaim March 17, 2026, as Profound Autism Awareness Day in the State of New York; and be it further

RESOLVED, That a copy of this Resolution, suitably engrossed, be transmitted to The Honorable Kathy Hochul, Governor of the State of New York, and various autism advocacy organizations throughout the State of New York.