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ASAN Endorses New York Bill to Stop The Shock

WASHINGTON, DC -

ASAN endorses today's introduction of a bill in the New York state legislature that would ban New York State from sending people with disabilities to the Judge Rotenberg Center. On Wednesday, May 4th, Sen. Jabari Brisport & Am. Harvey Epstein stood with disability rights advocates to announce new legislation targeting facilities that practice electro-shock treatments on disabled children.

For decades, disabled advocates have fought to end torture at the Judge Rotenberg Center. Andre's Law, which will stop any more New Yorkers from being sent to the JRC, is a critical step towards closing this dangerous and abusive institution for good. The Autistic Self Advocacy Network is proud to support this important legislation.

The bill, "Andre's Law," is named in honor of [Andre McCollins](#), a survivor of contingent electric shock and other forms of aversive conditioning (the practice of repeatedly and intentionally inducing pain or discomfort in an attempt to alter a person's behavior.) Andre was sent to an out-of-state, DOE-approved facility where he was subjected to aversive conditioning and ultimately hospitalized after being tied to a board and shocked thirty-one times over seven hours. New York State continues to send children to this same facility, [the Judge Rotenberg Center](#).

In 2005, New York prohibited aversive conditioning within the borders of New York. However, a loophole in the law has resulted in New York spending more than \$100 million over the past decade sending disabled children and adults to out-of-state facilities that use contingent electric shock and other forms of aversive conditioning. The majority of the people sent to the JRC are Black and Brown, and New York sends more people than any other state. This means that New York students of color are disproportionately being tortured by the Judge Rotenberg Center.

In [2020](#), after decades of advocacy from disability advocates, the FDA banned the use of the electric shock device. However, the ruling was struck down by the District of Columbia Circuit Court in [2021](#). ASAN continues to advocate on a federal level to ban the device, and are proud to work with New York State advocates and legislators on this important state-level bill.

ASAN will not rest until no one is subject to electric shock torture, and no one is in an institution. This is a crucial step towards closing the Judge Rotenberg Center.

QUOTES FROM KEY LEGISLATORS AND ALLIES ON THE BILL:

“No facility that thinks it’s acceptable to electro-shock children can be trusted with their care. Our nation has found excuses for far too long to lock away disabled children and subject them to inhumane practices. The legacy of Willowbrook and of forced lobotomies lives on in electro-shock and New York must stop funding facilities that engage in its use.” **said Senator Brisport, chair of the Senate’s Children and Families Committee**

“Medical professionals, federal agencies, international human rights groups, and dozens of states oppose the use of electro-shock procedures, which cause physical harm and trauma to its victims. While New York has outlawed the use of electro-shock “treatment” a major loophole exists wherein people with disabilities are sent by New York state agencies to the last remaining institution in the country that uses these cruel and harmful procedures. I am proud to be standing with Senator Brisport and a strong coalition to end the victimization and harm to New Yorkers with disabilities,” **said Assemblymember Harvey Epstein.**

Cheryl McCollins, mother of Andre McCollins, spoke at the press conference and said “the only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing.”

“To all the residents of JRC I say, I see you. Your community of disabled people sees you. You matter. Your lives mean more than what you have been led to believe when you are tortured and shocked, and treated as less than human. You are a person worthy of all the best that life has to offer, and you have a community that will continue to fight for your freedom from the torture you are currently forced to endure,” **said Sharon daVanport, Executive Director of Autistic Women & Nonbinary Network (AWN)**

"For too long, our government and other public and private institutions have subjugated disabled people, not respecting our humanity or our bodily autonomy," **said Tony Alexander, Director of Policy & Advocacy for the Autistic People of Color Fund.** "Institutions that use abusive behavior modification techniques—to punish disabled people for their mannerisms or in response to disabled people's mental health crises—have no place in our society. It's not lost on us that these harmful techniques are often used disproportionately on Black and Brown disabled people in particular, making the link between disability justice and racial justice all the more evident. We commend Senator Brisport and all of those who have worked tirelessly within the New York State Assembly and Senate on disability justice issues.”

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The Autistic Self Advocacy Network seeks to advance the principles of the disability rights movement with regard to autism. ASAN believes that the goal of autism advocacy should be a world in which autistic people enjoy equal access, rights, and opportunities. We work to empower autistic people across the world to take control of our own lives and the future of our common community, and seek to organize the autistic community to ensure our voices are heard in the national conversation about us. Nothing About Us, Without Us!