

STATE OF NEW YORK  
DIVISION OF HUMAN RIGHTS  
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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**NEW YORK STATE DIVISION OF HUMAN RIGHTS LAUNCHES  
DIVISION INITIATED INVESTIGATION OF THE EAST  
MEADOW SCHOOL DISTRICT**

The Division of Human Rights has begun a Division-initiated investigation relative to a recent incident involving a fourteen-year-old student at the W. Tresper Clarke High School of the East Meadow School District in Westbury, Long Island. Ninth-grader John Cave, who is deaf, is being denied access to the school with his service dog. Within hours of learning of John's situation, the Division took immediate steps to initiate an investigation.

The Division of Human Rights exists to enforce the State's Human Rights Law with jurisdiction in the areas of employment, housing, places of public accommodation, education and credit. Section 296.14 of the Human Rights Law specifically provides that it is an unlawful discriminatory practice "...for any person engaged in any activity covered by this section to discriminate against... a person with a disability on the basis of his or her use of a guide dog, hearing dog or service dog." The agency has the authority to pursue and prosecute potential violations of the Human Rights Law on its own initiative. This is the first Division-initiated investigation in over a decade.

Governor Spitzer lauded the Division's investigation and said: "As I have said repeatedly, the proper role of Government is to make possible the pursuit of prosperity and opportunity for all-by leveling the playing field to ensure that all New Yorkers have a fair shot at the American Dream. That role is critical for those New Yorkers who suffer from discrimination or the legacy of discrimination because of their race, gender, age, physical ability, or other protected characteristics."

The Division's Commissioner-designate, Kumiki Gibson echoed Governor Spitzer's sentiments, stating: "I can think of no more important duty than to ensure the rights of New Yorkers with disabilities." Gibson added, "We do not know whether the school's decision violated the law, but we are certainly

committed to investigating the matter and to taking the appropriate action."

Division officials confirmed that they have already been in contact with the East Meadow School District and its Counsel, as well as the mother of John Cave. The Division hopes to conduct an investigation and reach a resolution in the matter as early as possible.

For additional information, contact the Division of Human Rights at: (718) 741-8301.

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*New York has the proud distinction of being the first state in the nation to enact a Human Rights Law, which affords every citizen "an equal opportunity to enjoy a full and productive life." The New York State Division of Human Rights was created to enforce this important law and does so through, among other things, the vigorous prosecution of unlawful discriminatory practices and the receipt, investigation, and resolution of complaints of discrimination. Please visit the Division's website at [www.dhr.state.ny.us](http://www.dhr.state.ny.us) for additional information about the agency and its work.*