

## OneStep is Back Help Wanted To Fight For Access

**BY PHIL BEDER**  
DIA MEMBER



**T**oo many stores in New York City are not accessible to people who use mobility devices and a new and re-energized “DIA OneStep Campaign” aims to tackle that problem.

We are asking people to report stores that have recently changed hands and are not providing access. We will use this data to find out why existing New York City law is not being enforced. This is just a first step in the new OneStep Campaign’s effort.

OneStep has been creating access to small businesses in this City for, close to 25 years. Disabled in Action of Metro NY (DIA) organized OneStep in the early 1990s as a grassroots program to encourage small businesses to build ramps and make their stores accessible to people with mobility impairments.

OneStep is possible because New York City has strong local laws that require access in many commercial and residential spaces and makes it fairly easy to build a ramp. Provisions of local building codes say that a ramp can be built on a city sidewalk in most cases.

Another part of local building law states that when an existing store closes and a different store opens in that space, the new store must be accessible. In other words, if a shoe store closes and a restaurant opens in that same space, that restaurant has to provide access. But too often new store owners don’t obey the law and the Buildings Department is not doing its job of enforcement.

DIA is reactivating the OneStep program with a multi-pronged campaign to promote access. The first step is to identify stores that have recently changed hands and have not provided access. The next step will be to ask the Buildings Department why these stores were given a “Certificate of Occupancy” to operate without fulfilling their responsibility of providing access.

We understand that there are establishments that will not be able to build a ramp. Some locations might not have enough room to construct a ramp and for others, the expense might be too great. But everyone must understand their obligation to accommodate people with disabilities.

In the OneStep Campaign’s last incarnation, DIA members filed reports on inaccessible locations with the New York City Commission on Human Rights and the results were great. Members of this renewed campaign want to involve more city agencies like the Buildings Department, the city’s Small Business Services department and the Mayor’s Office for People with Disabilities (MOPD).

A more important aspect of the new campaign will be increased grassroots involvement between advocates for access and local store owners.

If you know of any stores that have changed hands and have not been made accessible, then please join the OneStep Campaign by telling us where it is. We would need the location, what the store was and what it became.

You can send your information by email to [Treasurer@DisabledInAction.org](mailto:Treasurer@DisabledInAction.org) or by telephone at 718 853-8171. Be sure to leave your contact information on the answering machine.