

The community board should reconsider the far-reaching implications of its statements, and so should elected officials such as South Shore Assemblyman Robert Straniere, who says he defers to the community, and South Shore Councilman Stephen Fiala, who says while he supports such efforts on behalf of the developmentally disabled in general, he sees "merit on both sides" in this case. That's the standard line for politicians, and not just Mr. Fiala, who don't want to upset constituents irrationally opposed to such a demonstrably harmless, well-intended plan, however unfair, irresponsible and that opposition may get — and still appear sympathetic to the cause. Generalities are fine; the specifics is where they develop their concerns.

This episode is a cue for all of Staten Island's elected officials to go on the record and reject community prejudice couched as "concern" and support unequivocally, decisively in the strongest terms, the ideal of every corner of our borough being a community enriched by all kinds of people, even those whose lifestyle and limitations require supervision in a group residential setting. Indeed, the best communities are those that embrace that principle, as some Island neighborhoods have already found.

Borough President Guy Molinari has taken the lead on this important issue, saying boldly, "We have our work cut out for us, but that goes with the job. You need to take positions sometimes that others are going to disagree with you about. But that's what leadership is all about."

Elected officials, you're on.