



Defend Disability Rights and Community Integration

We are family members, self-advocates and friends of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities, representing members of family organizations across New York State.

We are devastated by recent actions taken by the federal government that threaten the hard-fought civil rights that allow people with intellectual and developmental disabilities to live as full citizens in their homes and communities.

Following the discovery of widespread neglect and abuse within the Willowbrook Institution fifty years ago, New York moved away from institutional settings and established community-based disability systems. While not perfect, New York's current system is outstanding nationally and based on the principles of accessibility, individualized choice and community integration. A recent Department of Justice opinion wants to overturn decades of improvement in the lives of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities by suggesting there is no longer a mandate for community inclusion.

This new development should concern us all. New York's Office for People with Developmental Disabilities (OPWDD) currently relies on \$7 billion in Federal Medicaid to fund its disability system; money that matches what New York spends. These services support people to live in a home, get dressed in the morning, shop for food and cook their meals, go to work, attend programs and classes, and socialize with friends. They also benefit communities by providing jobs for support staff and people with disabilities.

People with intellectual and developmental disabilities deserve access to live in their communities among family, friends, colleagues and caregivers; not to be tucked away behind walls that separate them from real life experience and genuine relationships. Both New York State and the federal government must uphold the intent of the Americans with Disabilities Act through enforcement of the Supreme Court's 1999 Olmstead Decision and preserve the civil rights of children and adults with disabilities.

We must urgently and fiercely defend the civil rights of all people with disabilities and insist on governance that respects the unique needs of each individual and family. It is time to unite and preserve New York's community-based disability service system and the choice to access services that best meet needs.

September 2026

Group Signatories:

Bronx Developmental Disabilities Council
Brooklyn Developmental Disabilities Council
Developmental Disabilities Alliance of Western New York (DDAWNY) Family Committee
Chinese-American Planning Council (CPC)
Eastern New York Developmental Disabilities Advocates (ENYDDA)
Long Island Advocacy Network for the Developmentally Disabled (LIANDDD)
Manhattan Developmental Disabilities Council
New York City Family Advocacy Information Resource (NYC FAIR)
New York Alliance for Developmental Disabilities (NYADD)
New York Self-Determination Coalition
Project R.E.A.D.Y
Queens Council on Developmental Disabilities
Supporting our Youth and Adults Network, Inc. (SOYAN)
Staten Island Developmental Disabilities Council
Statewide Advocacy Network of New York (SWAN)

SHARE WITH YOUR GROUPS, FAMILY & FRIENDS: [CLICK FOR PDF OF LETTER](#)

Share Individual Sign On Link: <https://forms.gle/U5HA7gtDn7CPpxzD9>