

## PRESS RELEASE

Disability Advocacy Alliance  
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### **Disability Advocacy Alliance Requests the State of Ohio to Provide Separate and Independent Legal Representation to Protect Fragile Ohioans From Disability Rights Ohio (DRO) Litigation**

Disability Advocacy Alliance (DAA), disabled individuals and their families are sending letters to Governor Kasich and Attorney General Mike DeWine requesting separate and independent legal representation to defend Ohioans with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD) against a DRO lawsuit harmful to their health, safety and welfare.

Through decades of threats and litigation, DRO, Ohio's Protection and Advocacy (P&A) system for individuals with disabilities, has put fragile Ohioans at risk of losing life sustaining services, leaving parents, guardians and family members in a constant state of worry, concerned about their disabled loved one's future.

DRO's lawsuit attacks Ohio's Intermediate Care Facility (ICF) program, sheltered workshops and facility-based day programs which over 37,000 thousand Ohioans with intellectual and developmental disabilities rely on for higher levels of care such as 24-hour nursing, monitoring and/or behavioral supports. The suit seeks to substantially redirect state resources away from these programs to "community settings".

Disability Advocacy Alliance recognizes the need for the full array of services (community care and facility-based care) to support the diverse needs of Ohioans with disabilities. We believe, however, the choice of where to live and work resides with the individual acting independently or with the aid of responsible family members or other guardians. **These choices should not be made through an unwelcome and unrepresentative lawsuit.**

Federal law obligates the state of Ohio to provide legal representation to all individuals with disabilities regardless of the severity or degree of disability. Individuals requiring higher levels of care, however, find themselves disassociated from DRO, their protection and advocacy system, and left devoid of legal representation in a case that directly affects their health and welfare. **Clearly, DRO suffers a disqualifying conflict of interest.**

DAA **urgently requests Governor Kasich to provide separate and independent legal representation** to individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities whose interests and well-being are jeopardized by DRO's litigation. We ask for Governor Kasich's immediate attention to this crucial matter due to the life-altering and dangerous consequences DRO's class suit could trigger.

DRO's actions will waste scarce resources as taxpayer monies and manpower are being directed away from caring for the full spectrum of individuals with disabilities to defending and prosecuting a wrongheaded lawsuit. The demand of DRO, a taxpayer-funded agency, for an additional award of legal fees only adds insult to injury to individuals who rely on state disability services. The vast majority of Ohioans choose caring for individuals with disabilities over paying the fees of high-priced, out-of-state law firms.

DAA looks to Governor Kasich and his administration to vigorously defend Ohio's most vulnerable citizens from DRO's dangerous suit. **We ask Governor Kasich to protect the full continuum of care in Ohio and the right of Ohioans with disabilities to make individual choices about where they live and work.**

DAA's letter to Attorney General Mike DeWine can be found [HERE](#).

*Disability Advocacy Alliance is a volunteer organization formed by parents and family members to protect the rights of individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities in Ohio. Learn more at [www.DisabilityAdvocacyAlliance.org](http://www.DisabilityAdvocacyAlliance.org)*