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Forty-five leading organizations denounce DOJ opinion threatening the rights of people with disabilities

CHICAGO — **NAMI Chicago** joins with 44 other leading human service, advocacy, and legal organizations today to issue the following statement denouncing the [June 18 legal opinion](#) issued by the U.S. Department of Justice's Office of Legal Counsel, which seeks to dismantle one of the nation's most important civil rights for people with disabilities: the right to receive services in their own homes and communities.

On June 18, the U.S. Department of Justice's Office of Legal Counsel (OLC) [released a legal opinion](#) that aims to dismantle one of the most important civil rights protections for people with disabilities. This new opinion declares that states will no longer be required to serve people with disabilities in their own homes and communities, contrary to current law, and that the federal rules requiring it should be thrown out.

For more than 25 years, that requirement ensuring that people with disabilities receive services in community rather than being unnecessarily institutionalized has been settled ground. The Supreme Court held in *Olmstead v. L.C.* that the unjustified institutional isolation of people with disabilities is a form of discrimination under the Americans with Disabilities Act. The *Olmstead* decision affirmed a simple truth: people living with disabilities belong in their communities, with their families, in their jobs and schools and neighborhoods, not warehoused out of sight.

The OLC opinion seeks to gut the bedrock recognitions of *Olmstead* that people with mental and intellectual disability deserve dignity, respect, and equal protection under the law. It blames the very real problems of our under-resourced social service system on the very people these systems seek to serve. However, instead of investing in proven community-based supports that work, this opinion calls for the return of failed warehouses that people enter and never leave. It argues that the federal integration rules, enforced for decades by both the Justice Department and the Department of Health and Human Services, are unlawful and should be rescinded. The opinion does not change the law and sets no legal precedent. But it is a clear signal of how this administration intends to enforce, or refuse to enforce, the civil rights of people with disabilities.

This is an attack on the dignity and freedom of people living with disabilities, plain and simple. The right to live in your own community, near the people who love you, is not a bureaucratic technicality. It's a foundational protection that enables millions of our fellow Americans the freedom to live in communities of their choice rather than holding cells. This opinion asserts government control over where people with disabilities are allowed to exist, undermining a basic freedom enjoyed by all citizens of this country.

We have spent decades supporting people as they move out of the shadows of institutions and into the lives they choose for themselves. People with disabilities are not a problem to be managed out of view. They are our neighbors, our family members, our coworkers, our friends. In fact, much of the work that's been accomplished over the past decades would not have been possible without the leadership and efforts of so many in our field that live with disabilities. The promise of Olmstead is a community where we all can live, work, and make a difference together. We will keep fighting for that promise.

We call on Illinois leaders to reaffirm, in the clearest possible terms, that this state will continue to invest in community-based care and honor the integration mandate regardless of what Washington says. And we call on Illinoisans to stand together in defending community-based care and opposing these efforts to dismantle civil rights.

Supporting Organizations

- NAMI Chicago
- Trilogy
- Josselyn
- Access Living
- Legal Council for Health Justice
- AIDS Foundation Chicago
- Center for Housing and Health
- Health & Medicine Policy Research Group
- Community Behavioral Healthcare Association of IL (CBHA)
- ACLU of Illinois
- EverThrive Illinois
- Bazelon Center for Mental Health Law
- National Association of Social Workers (NASW) Illinois Chapter
- Inseparable
- Equip for Equality
- Treatment Alternatives for Stronger Communities
- The Illinois Psychological Association
- Healthy Illinois Campaign
- Rozovics Law Firm, LLC
- NAMI Illinois
- NAMI – Greater Mississippi Valley
- Center for Disability & Elder Law
- NAMI Metro Suburban
- NAMI Kane-south, DeKalb, and Kendall Counties
- Children's Place Association
- Mental Health America of Illinois
- NAMI Lake County Illinois

- Will County Community Mental Health Board
- NAMI Northwest Suburbs Chicago
- NAMI Northern Illinois
- Citizen Action/Illinois
- Reuland Law, LLC
- Alliance for Community Services
- Humanize Long Term Care Campaign
- Monahan Law Group, LLC
- Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance (DBSA)
- Libenu
- Holistic Healing Source
- Jorwic Family
- Illinois Alliance of Peer Professionals
- AgeOptions
- JCFS Chicago
- Housing Action Illinois
- Housing Task Force
- Jewish United Fund

NAMI Chicago serves more than 40,000 people each year through crisis support, care coordination, education, outreach, and advocacy. Earlier this month, the organization was also named a [2026 Gold recipient of Mental Health America's Bell Seal for Workplace Mental Health](#).

To learn more about NAMI Chicago and our work, visit www.namichicago.org.

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