

Many Voices / One Vision



The Community Advocacy Coalition for Developmental Disabilities

August 10, 2026

Members of the Washington State Legislature

RE: Protecting the Right of People with Disabilities to Live in the Community

Dear Washington State legislators

The Community Advocacy Coalition for Developmental Disabilities (CAC) is a statewide alliance representing self-advocates, families, and service providers. We are committed to ensuring that people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) can live safely, participate meaningfully, and thrive in their communities.

We are writing this to express our strong disagreement with the U.S. Department of Justice Office of Legal Counsel opinion issued on June 18, 2026, concerning the Americans with Disabilities Act, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, and the Supreme Court's decision in *Olmstead v. L.C.* The opinion concludes that these federal laws did not impose an integration mandate on states and that *Olmstead* did not require services in the most integrated setting appropriate to a person's needs. We strongly disagree with their opinion because this goes against over 50 years of hard-fought advocacy by lawmakers and community members alike who worked day and night to help people with IDD live in their local community and be able to lead full, meaningful lives.

For the CAC, this is not simply a disagreement about legal language. It is about whether people with disabilities will continue to have a meaningful opportunity to receive the support they need without being separated from their families, friends, neighbors, and communities.

We ask Washington State lawmakers to act together

Washington should not wait for federal protections to become weaker or uncertain. We ask lawmakers from both parties to work with self-advocates, families, disability organizations, service providers, and state agencies to develop Washington State legislation codifying the right of people with disabilities to live in the most integrated setting appropriate to their individual needs.

- Put the right to community integration and protection from unnecessary institutionalization into Washington State law.
- Create a comprehensive statewide community integration plan and update it regularly.
- Require agencies to evaluate whether proposed service reductions could increase a person's risk of institutionalization before cuts are made.
- Track public data on service gaps, waiting lists, housing, employment, transportation, health care, crisis supports, institutional transitions, and people at risk of institutionalization.
- Give self-advocates and people who use services a central role in developing, reviewing, and measuring the plan.

- Pair planning and accountability with sustainable funding so that the promise of community living can become a reality in every part of Washington.

This should not be a partisan issue. It is about freedom, dignity, safety, equality, and responsible public policy. Community services help people build lives, remain connected to their families, contribute to local communities, and avoid more restrictive and often more costly settings.

Our lives belong in the community

People with IDD, our families, and our supporters have fought for generations for the ability to receive services in our own homes and communities. We do not want to return to a time when a person had to enter an institution simply to receive assistance.

People with IDD are fully human. They have dreams, goals, relationships, talents, responsibilities, and the same desire for freedom and belonging as everyone else. Needing help with daily living, communication, health, transportation, employment, or personal care does not make someone less worthy of a life in the community. We strongly affirm that those with IDD should not be isolated or cast out of society just because they require assistance.

People with IDD want to work, live, learn, worship, build relationships, volunteer, vote, and play in our communities. Home and Community-Based Services (HCBS) make those ordinary parts of life possible. HCBS pays for supported living services, residential services, personal care, employment supports, transportation assistance, habilitation, respite, communication supports, crisis services, and other community programs. They are the foundation that allows many people with disabilities to live safely and direct their own lives.

What *Olmstead* protects

In *Olmstead*, the Supreme Court recognized that unjustified institutional isolation can be disability discrimination. The decision does not require every institution to close or ignore safety, clinical needs, or available resources. It requires community services when placement is appropriate, the person does not oppose it, and the services can be reasonably accommodated. Choice is not meaningful when community services are unavailable or waiting lists last for years.

Why we disagree with the DOJ opinion

The DOJ opinion does not repeal the ADA, Section 504, or *Olmstead*, but it could weaken how federal agencies investigate complaints and enforce integration protections. The disability community is not demanding “maximum integration” at any cost. We are asking for appropriate services, meaningful choice, reasonable accommodations, and steady progress toward a system that does not unnecessarily segregate people.

Federal policy should move the nation forward, not reopen the door to unnecessary institutionalization. The answer to workforce shortages, service gaps, housing barriers, and budget pressures is to solve those problems—not to weaken the right to community life.

Medicaid Cuts and Our State Budget

These concerns are especially urgent because federal Medicaid changes and Washington’s budget pressures may affect disability services, long-term care, housing, behavioral health, and the direct support workforce. HCBS are not optional; they allow many people to remain safely at home. Cuts or delays can overwhelm families, destabilize providers, and push people into more restrictive settings. We ask lawmakers to protect these services and reject any return to unnecessary institutionalization, and protect the services that make community life possible. Let Washington show the nation that people with disabilities are valued members of our communities—not people to be hidden away.

Many voices. One vision: every person should have the opportunity to belong, make choices, and live a full life in the community.

Sincerely,

Community Advocacy Coalition for Developmental Disabilities

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Organizations

Allies In Advocacy

AtWork!

Community Employment Alliance

Community Residential Services Association

Developmental Disabilities Ombuds

Disability Rights Washington

Entrust Community Services

Exceptional Foresters, Inc.

Governor's Committee on Disability Issues and Employment

Hispanic Disability Support SWWA (Pasitos Gigantes)

Kinderling

Kittitas County Parent Coalition

Life Enrichment Options (LEO)

Max Higbee Center

Northwest Center

Parent Coalition Grant/Adams County

Parkview Services

Partners4Housing

PAVE

PeaceNW

Self Advocates In Leadership

Sherwood Community Services

Spokane Disability Collaborative

Tavon Learning Center

The Arc of King County

The Arc of Snohomish County

The Arc of Spokane

The Arc of Tri-Cities

The Arc of Washington State

The Arc of Whatcom County

Trillium Employment Services

Washington Multicultural Services Link

Washington State Developmental Disabilities Council

Wise

Work Opportunities

Individuals

Alyssa Midgley

Cathy Murahashi

Darci Ladwig

Donna Tracy

Gabriela Ewing

Karen A Williams

Kim Lappala

Kristina Mendieta

Lance Morehouse

Linda Wilkinson

Marc Côté

Michael Stewart

Pam Blanton

Ramona Hattendorf

Riannon Bardsley

Ruth Ann Lunderville

Shawn E. Latham

Tom Gaulke

Tracy Kahlo

Background materials

- [U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Legal Counsel opinion \(June 18, 2026\)](#)
- [Colorado House Bill 25-1017: Community Integration Plan for Individuals with Disabilities](#)
- [Community advocacy video provided with this letter](#)