



Center for Public
Representation

CPR Newsletter | March 2025

Updates on Litigation, Initiatives and Staff

Dear friends,

At CPR we are prepared to respond to the significant threats to the legal rights, support programs, and independence of people with disabilities achieved during the last fifty years. For example, in 1973, Congress passed Section 504, the first federal anti-discrimination disability law. Now, Attorneys General from Texas and sixteen other states have filed a lawsuit that asks a federal court to declare Section 504 unconstitutional. Their legal claims, if successful, could be a basis for challenging other disability rights laws across the country. At the same time, the disability community is now mobilizing to protect Medicaid, the government program that funds supports and services to people with disabilities, which the new administration has targeted for substantial cuts. At CPR we are prepared to stand with and for the disability community and to defend these and other disability rights that are at risk.

CPR Defends Section 504 Against Attack by Seventeen States

In May, the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) issued new regulations to enforce the original non-discrimination law for people with disabilities – Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act. This was the first update of the 504 regulations since 1977, and included new provisions on health care, child welfare, communication, technology, and community integration. In September, Texas and 16 other states filed a lawsuit seeking to cancel these new regulations and declare the 1973 statutory provision unconstitutional. CPR, together with a broad disability coalition, organized a strategy to save 504 and defeat this lawsuit. Recently, CPR described the case, and efforts to defend 504 in the courts, in a [community briefing to over 3,000 participants](#). In response, people with disabilities across the country are now informed about the threat to their civil rights, and demanding that their states withdraw from the lawsuit.

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CPR Submits Amici Brief to Support Louisville, Kentucky Consent Decree

In response to the murder of Breonna Taylor, the Department of Justice conducted an investigation of the Louisville Metro police department (LMPD). It concluded that LMPD engaged in a pattern and practice of violating the constitutional rights of Louisville citizens, and the ADA's non-discrimination provisions for people with disabilities. In December 2024, DOJ and LMPD signed a Consent Decree, which required significant modifications to Louisville's 911 dispatch program, including providing a behavioral health response to mental health emergencies, consistent with public safety.

CPR, and its partners the Bazelon Center and Baker Hostetler LLP, submitted an [amici brief](#) on behalf of 19 national mental health experts, law enforcement professionals, national and local mental health advocacy organizations, and local homeless service providers. The brief described why behavioral health responses were more appropriate, more effective, less expensive, and safer than dispatching armed police to mental health emergency calls. The brief urged the Court to approve the Decree, and the behavioral health provisions as reasonable modifications under the ADA. In response to the Court's request for further briefing, CPR and its partners will submit an additional brief discussing the national and local data on the effectiveness of behavioral health responses.

CPR Supports Proposed Rule to Sunset Federal Subminimum Wage Program

In January 2025, the Center for Public Representation (CPR) submitted [comments](#) in strong support of the U.S. Department of Labor's Notice of Proposed Rulemaking that would phase out subminimum wage certificates issued under section 14(c) of the Fair Labor Standards Act. CPR's comments were informed by its deep experience litigating systemic cases on behalf of people with disabilities across the country, including [Lane v. Kitzhaber](#), the first case in the nation to apply the Americans with Disabilities Act to sheltered workshops. In its comments, CPR described how changes in federal law, expanded options and services for people with disabilities, reductions in utilization of subminimum wage programs, and dramatic shifts in state and federal policy justified the Proposed Rule, which represents a critical step towards expanding opportunities for competitive integrated employment for people with disabilities. CPR also joined the comments of members of the [Consortium for Constituents with Disabilities \(CCD\)](#), and the Collaboration to Promote Self-Determination (CPSD), which show widespread support of the Proposed Rule.

CPR Welcomes Diana Samarasan as Director of Strategic Advancement



Diana Samarasan is CPR's first Director of Strategic Advancement. With decades of experience advocating for global disability rights and mobilizing resources, she joins CPR at a pivotal moment for disability justice.

"I am thrilled to take this role at one of the most renowned civil rights organizations addressing disability rights in the United States. During these tumultuous times, we see even more clearly that justice domestically and internally in our institutions is deeply intertwined with justice globally. I look forward to growing resources for this work," said Samarasan.

In her role, Diana will help position CPR for long-term financial sustainability and impact. Cathy Costanzo, Executive Director at CPR states, "Diana's start at CPR could not have come at a better time—we are delighted to have someone with her strategic expertise, track record, and commitment to disability justice join our team." [Read more about Diana.](#)

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Center for Public Representation

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