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Center for Public Representation

Dear Friends,

Many of our updates over the past several months have reflected the difficult challenges and attacks facing the disability rights community. This month, we want to take a moment to celebrate the light. CPR is marking 50 years of expanding, protecting, and preserving the rights of people with disabilities. We have been fighting for these rights long before the current challenges emerged, and we will remain steadfast long after. At our recent 50th anniversary symposium, speakers reflected on the tenacity, expertise, creativity, and vision that have defined CPR's work over five decades. It is this combination of persistence and purpose that has helped turn hard-fought legal victories into meaningful change in the lives of people with disabilities.

In this newsletter, we share our work with national partners to protect the voting rights of people with disabilities living in nursing facilities, our advocacy to safeguard due process rights in Massachusetts civil commitment proceedings, and our efforts to preserve community-based mental health services for children in Maine. We are deeply grateful to the partners, colleagues, and supporters who make this work possible, and look forward to building on this legacy for the years ahead.

With gratitude,

Cathy Costanzo
Executive Director

CPR and Allies Prepare Resource on Voting Protections for People with Disabilities

CPR collaborated with allied organizations to respond to a July 26 Special Alert issued by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) regarding the rights of disabled voters who are institutionalized in nursing facilities. The July memo withdrew earlier guidance about the obligation of facilities like nursing homes to help residents vote and replaced it with new guidance that refers to false claims about absentee voting as a source of fraud. Along with the American Civil Liberties Union, the Arc of the United States, the American Association of People with Disabilities, and the National Disability Rights Network, CPR prepared a resource document to help voters, their assistors, and advocates avoid unnecessary fear or confusion that the July memo might create.

The bottom line is that the new CMS guidance does not (and cannot) change legal voting protections for people with disabilities, including those who live in nursing homes. People who live in nursing homes generally have the right to vote and to seek assistance from their preferred helper, and nursing home staff should be encouraged to assist them in doing so as needed and requested.

CPR Files FOIA Lawsuit Against DOJ to Obtain Records Relied on in the OLC Olmstead Memo

On October 22, 2026, CPR, represented by Terris, Pravlik & Millian, LLP, filed a lawsuit against the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) to obtain documents related to the Office of Legal Counsel's Opinion. The documents were cited in or relied upon in the legal memoranda issued by DOJ on June 18, 2026, negatively reinterpreting how the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Rehabilitation Act apply to people with mental health conditions and other disabilities in institutional settings. CPR, national partners and the disability community have denounced this interpretation.

CPR first requested these records on July 27, 2026, under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), a federal law that gives the public the right to request government records. The government has not responded to CPR's request or provided the documents within the time required by law. CPR's lawsuit asks a federal court to order DOJ to release the requested records. The Complaint in *Center for Public Representation v. United States Department of Justice* can be found here

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CPR and Partners Defend Federal Court Decision Preserving Children's Mental Health Settlement Agreement in Maine

On October 26, 2026, CPR and its partners submitted a friend of the court brief urging the First Circuit to affirm a U.S. District Court's decision rejecting proposed changes to a December 2024 Settlement Agreement between the State of Maine and the United States Department of Justice (DOJ). The Agreement resolved alleged violations of the Americans with Disabilities Act by reforming the State's behavioral health system, expanding access to community-based services, and preventing the unnecessary institutionalization of children with disabilities.

Previously, CPR and partners at the ACLU of Maine, Disability Rights Maine, and GLAD Law successfully opposed these same changes proposed by the DOJ and the State of Maine. Their joint proposal would have significantly weakened the Settlement Agreement by limiting families' access to information about new community service options, removing provider training requirements, preventing timely clinical assessments and transition planning for justice-involved youth, and eliminating key safeguards in place to monitor children's receipt of integrated services. The Coalition's recent press release can be found here

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CPR Urges Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court to Protect Access to Timely Civil Commitment Hearings

On October 23, 2026, CPR and local partners submitted an amicus (friend-of-the-court) brief with Massachusetts' highest court addressing the

interaction between two long standing due process rights for people who are the subject of in civil commitment hearings: the right to prompt judicial review and the right to request a continuance of hearing deadlines in order to prepare a meaningful defense. Amici argues that legislative history and decades of court decisions interpreting the plain language of the statute support the principle that continuance dates requested by the individual and approved by the court should be treated as mandatory deadlines. Any further continuance of these deadlines over the individual's objection can only occur under extraordinary circumstances. It is noteworthy that the person is confined in a mental health facility during a continuance.

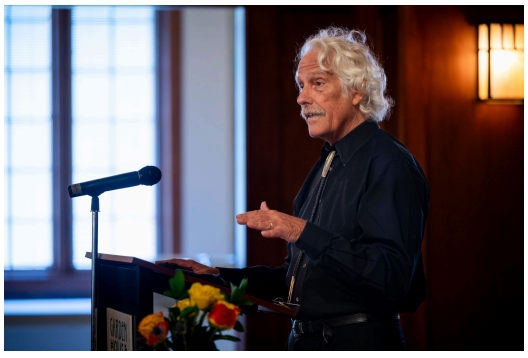
The Brief of Amicus Curiae was co-filed with the Mental Health Legal Advisors Committee and the Disability Law Center of Massachusetts. Oral argument is scheduled for November 2, 2026.

CPR Celebrates 50 Years of Change

On October 8, 2026, CPR brought together leaders and longtime advocates in disability rights law to celebrate five decades of progress, partnership, and advocacy. The celebration began with a symposium, *50 Years of Change: Rights, Reform, and a Vision for the Future*, featuring voices from across CPR's history and current work. Speakers reflected on the evolution of disability rights law, the milestones that have shaped the movement, and the challenges and opportunities ahead. Their reflections celebrated how far we have come while reaffirming our shared commitment to the work that remains.

The symposium was followed by an evening of celebration, bringing together the colleagues, partners, and advocates who have been part of CPR's journey over the past five decades.

We are deeply grateful to everyone who joined us in person and to those who celebrated with us from afar. Your partnership, dedication, and continued support have made these 50 years of progress possible. We look forward to continuing this work together and building on this legacy for generations to come.









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Community Champion — $100
Advocate for Belonging — $250
Homecoming Circle — $1,000+
Liberation Society — $5,000+
Belonging Circle — $10,000+
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