

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
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**OPRA Expresses Concern About Timing, Scope and Assertions in DD Lawsuit**

Columbus – The Ohio Provider Resource Association (OPRA) at their conference today expressed concern about the timing, scope and assertions made in the lawsuit recently filed by Disability Rights Ohio. Over 300 people heard this message today at the OPRA 2016 Spring Conference in Dublin, Ohio. OPRA is the statewide trade association representing more than 150 small businesses and organizations that provide services to people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (DD).

OPRA questions the timing, scope and assertions in the lawsuit. According to OPRA, several large groups of stakeholders representative of the developmental disability (DD) system worked hard recently to develop strategies for system reform over the next 10 years. These groups, under the leadership of Ohio Department of Developmental Disabilities (DODD) Director, John Martin, forged a comprehensive blueprint for our system's future that prioritizes the individual and their rightful place in the larger community. Governor Kasich supported these strategies with an unprecedented investment of about \$300 million over the biennium and significant policy changes directed toward community inclusion. Recently, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) applauded Ohio on our progress toward community inclusion, stating: "CMS appreciates the substantial progress Ohio has made toward ensuring compliance with the new requirements and the overall level of detail of the STP [state transition plan for community based services]".

Every part of Ohio's DD system is undergoing reform. Resources are stretched to the limit, families are both excited and scared. People with DD, families, the state, legislators, providers and county boards are working closely together to ensure the best outcomes for people with DD. "We are concerned that the lawsuit will grind these reforms to a halt", said Mark Davis, President, OPRA. Davis said the most meaningful and successful reform efforts are the result of all stakeholders working together to design and implement reform. Davis does not believe that the court system is the venue for this critical system design work.

OPRA questions assertions made in the lawsuit, in particular about the Intermediate Care Facility for Individuals with Intellectual Disabilities (ICF) program. The ICF program is a valuable component of the DD service continuum. In fact, there are people on waiting lists to be served by ICF's and most ICF's are near capacity, by the choice of people served there. People who live in an ICF consider it their home. ICF is a comprehensive service that includes socialization, vocational assistance, homemaker, personal care, housing, utilities, food, therapies and adaptive

transportation. It is a quality living environment for thousands of Ohioans who choose to live in an ICF.

“Let’s say that DRO gets what they are asking for and the court orders an expansion of waiver services. That will likely be impossible to implement. Providers struggle to find qualified direct support staff now, due to low wages and the demands of the job. Any expansion of demand will not likely be met. We are in the midst of a workforce crisis, with the #1 and #4 jobs in demand, according to the US DOL. Furthermore, we have a significant issue with the availability of accessible and affordable housing. People with DD are typically well below poverty level and living in the community places additional financial burden on them. They need to pay for housing, utilities, food and other noncovered services. None of these needs are addressed by this lawsuit. They must be addressed by a broad-based and inclusive group of committed people, not a court” Davis said.

