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PRESS RELEASE

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ACLU of Utah supports Lawsuit filed by the Disability Law Center and Parsons Behle & Latimer on Behalf of Institutionalized Utahns with Intellectual Disabilities

On January 12, 2018, the Disability Law Center (DLC) and the law firm of Parsons Behle & Latimer filed a class-action lawsuit in the United States District Court for the District of Utah against the state of Utah.

The ACLU of Utah supports this action because we believe that people with disabilities deserve the same opportunity to live and work in the mainstream of community life. We believe people with disabilities are worthy of being part of our country and our workforce, and that we all benefit when they are included.

“The state of Utah cannot isolate, institutionalize, and stigmatize these individuals just because of a disability,” says Leah Farrell, Staff Attorney at the ACLU of Utah. “We thank the Disability Law Center and their cooperating counsel for initiating this lawsuit. And we applaud these plaintiffs for standing up for their own rights—joining Martin Luther King, Jr. and countless other heroes in defending our liberties.”

The lawsuit asserts that Utah violates the Americans with Disabilities Act and the landmark Supreme Court ruling in *Olmstead v. L.C.* by operating its service system in a way that unnecessarily segregates individuals with intellectual disabilities in institutions. The 1999 *Olmstead* decision directed states to serve people with disabilities in the most integrated, least restrictive setting in the community.

“On the cusp of a national holiday honoring a champion of integration, we must acknowledge that segregation is discrimination,” says Leah Farrell. “Martin Luther King, Jr. knew that. Rosa Parks knew that. And Ed Roberts, the founder of the disability rights movement, knew that.”

“Restricting Utahns with intellectual disabilities to crowded, isolating, and unstimulating care facilities with no ability to access services in the community or live independently is discrimination—and it must be challenged.”

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