



DISABILITY RIGHTS NEW MEXICO

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Gary Housepian, Chief Executive Officer

Promoting and Protecting the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

Statement Regarding the Executive Order Issued on July 24, 2025:

“Ending Crime and Disorder on America’s Streets”

Disability Rights New Mexico (DRNM) strongly condemns the recent Executive Order “Ending Crime and Disorder on America’s Streets.” Issued on the 35th anniversary eve of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), this EO marks a disgraceful rollback of civil rights protections for people with disabilities—particularly individuals with mental health conditions.

The Order unjustly targets people with mental illness by labeling them as “unhoused, drug-seeking, sexually dangerous persons” responsible for crime in American cities. These grossly inaccurate and inflammatory depictions stigmatize people who courageously seek support for their mental health. This Order places their well-being and liberty under threat.

Self- determination is—and always has been--- the foundation of the disability rights movement. For generations, people with a variety of disabilities were “warehoused” into institutions and subjected to treatment imposed by professionals, families, and political authorities. In New Mexico, countless residents were taken to live at Los Lunas Hospital and Training School until its closure in 1997. The national landscape finally changed in 1999 when the U.S. Supreme Court issued its landmark *Olmstead* decision affirming the right of individuals to receive services in their communities--- or to decline treatment altogether. The Court held that segregation of people with disabilities constitutes discrimination under Title II of the ADA.

This EO seeks to reverse that progress by dramatically expanding the use of “civil commitment,” also known as involuntary commitment. It aims to give authorities broad power to lock people in institutions, forcibly treat them, and isolate them from family, friends, and community all in the name of “safety.” As New Mexico’s federally-mandated Protection and Advocacy agency, DRNM works daily with individuals who have been involuntarily committed. The reality is grim: being confined against your will, without access to familiar supports, is a traumatic and dehumanizing experience. There is minimal legal recourse, and the Executive Order seeks to eliminate even that.

Let us be clear: forced treatment is not care. It is coercion. It does not improve outcomes--- it exacerbates trauma and erodes trust in the very systems meant to support independence. People who recognize the need for treatment and seek access to it will

question whether there may be punitive consequences for their courage. Moreover, New Mexico has struggled for decades with a deficit of mental health providers. DRNM would like to see support for expanding our already limited provider network so that care goes to patients who actually *want* treatment, not those who are being forced into it.

DRNM proudly stands with individuals who have psychiatric disabilities. We affirm their right to autonomy, to make informed choices --- including the choice to refuse treatment --- and to live in their communities with dignity and freedom.

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