



# 1in6 Support

Advocacy, consulting, and support for  
families of children with disabilities,  
communities, and organizations

Michigan State Bar Foundation  
306 Townsend Street  
Lansing, MI 48933

Re: Disability Rights Michigan's Administration of Justice Grant Application

To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing in strong support of Disability Rights Michigan's (DRM) application for an Administration of Justice Grant to expand its Medicaid litigation and advocacy work. As Co-Executive Director of 1in6 Support, I work closely with families of individuals with disabilities across Michigan who rely on Medicaid-funded services to live safely and meaningfully in their communities.

Every day, we see firsthand the profound gaps in Michigan's behavioral and mental health system, particularly within Community Mental Health (CMH). Families struggle to access authorized services, navigate inconsistent policies across regions, and advocate for the basic supports their loved ones are entitled to receive. These are not isolated challenges; they are systemic issues that require systemic legal advocacy.

DRM has been uniquely positioned to take on this work. Its leadership in cases such as the Waskul litigation has already driven meaningful, statewide reforms that directly impact the families we serve. Their ability to combine legal expertise with a deep understanding of disability systems makes them an indispensable resource in Michigan.

There is a critical shortage of attorneys equipped to handle complex Medicaid cases, particularly those involving systemic failures in CMH and behavioral health services. DRM is one of the only organizations in the state with the capacity and expertise to pursue this work at scale. Expanding their legal team would significantly increase access to justice for individuals with disabilities and their families, many of whom have no other avenue for recourse.

At 1in6 Support, we regularly support families who benefit directly from the type of advocacy DRM provides. Strengthening DRM's capacity will not only improve individual outcomes, but will drive broader, lasting change across Michigan's Medicaid system.

I strongly urge the Foundation to support this proposal. The impact of this investment will be both immediate and far-reaching for some of Michigan's most vulnerable residents.

Sincerely,

Iris Mehler, MS, CRC  
Co-Executive Director  
1in6 Support  
(510) 331-1564  
[www.1in6support.org](http://www.1in6support.org)

4/14/26

Michigan State Bar Foundation  
306 Townsend Street  
Lansing, MI 48933

Re: Disability Rights Michigan's Administration of Justice Grant Application

To Whom It May Concern:

I write in wholehearted support of Disability Rights Michigan's ("DRM") application for an Administration of Justice Grant. The Arc Michigan has a long-standing relationship with DRM on working to improve the quality of life for people with disabilities and their families in Michigan. We have worked on Medicaid, Voting Access and Special Education to name just a few.

There is a pressing need for the systemic Medicaid litigation and advocacy proposed in DRM's application. Very few attorneys—private or in legal services—represent Medicaid recipients in the mental/behavioral health system, and even fewer bring the type of systemic Medicaid litigation that DRM has brought over the last ten years. Ensuring access to Medicaid coverage and services meets a critical access to justice need for people with disabilities throughout Michigan.

Having worked closely with DRM for years, I can attest that DRM is extremely well-positioned to do this work. Its litigation and advocacy are well known and respected throughout the state, and its staff are professional and hardworking. I have no doubt that DRM, if awarded this grant, will deliver measurable results that will benefit Michiganders with disabilities.

Sincerely,



Sherri Boyd





**AUTISM ALLIANCE  
OF MICHIGAN**

Help. Hope. Answers. Today.

**Main Office:**

26913 Northwestern Hwy., Ste. 520  
Southfield, MI 48033

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Michigan State Bar Foundation  
306 Townsend Street  
Lansing, MI 48933

**Re: Disability Rights Michigan's Administration of Justice Grant Application**

To Whom It May Concern:

I write in wholehearted support of Disability Rights Michigan's ("DRM") application for an Administration of Justice Grant. As a statewide advocacy organization committed to quality, inclusive medical and behavioral health care for individuals with autism spectrum disorder, Autism Alliance of Michigan has collaborated with DRM on multiple advocacy priorities to reduce barriers so frequently encountered by people with disabilities.

There is a pressing need for the systemic Medicaid litigation and advocacy proposed in DRM's application. Very few attorneys—private or in legal services—represent Medicaid recipients in the mental/behavioral health system, and even fewer bring the type of systemic Medicaid litigation that DRM has brought over the last ten years. Ensuring access to Medicaid coverage and services meets a critical access to justice need for people with disabilities throughout Michigan.

Having worked closely with DRM for years, I can attest that DRM is extremely well-positioned to do this work. Its litigation and advocacy are well known and respected throughout the state, and its staff are professional and hardworking. I have no doubt that DRM, if awarded this grant, will deliver measurable results that will benefit Michiganders with disabilities.

Sincerely,

*Colleen Allen Ph.D*

Colleen Allen, Ph.D., President & CEO, AAoM

## ***Summary***

A private donor is proposing to fund half of an attorney position at Disability Rights Michigan (“DRM”) for five years. The attorney will primarily work to address the colossal unmet needs of Medicaid beneficiaries receiving services through Michigan’s behavioral/mental health system. DRM is seeking funding for the other half of the position. This Bar Foundation proposal is for three years of that funding; DRM will secure separate funding for the other two years. The estimated full annual cost of the position<sup>1</sup> is \$125,000, meaning that the total funding requested over three years is \$187,500, or \$62,500 per year.

## ***Disability Rights Michigan***

DRM is the independent, private, nonprofit, and nonpartisan protection and advocacy organization authorized by federal and state law to advocate for and protect the legal rights of people with disabilities in Michigan. Designated by the governor of Michigan as this state’s Protection & Advocacy (“P & A”) System, DRM exists to protect the legal and human rights of Michiganders with developmental disabilities and mental illness. 42 U.S.C. §§ 15041 and 10801.

## ***DRM’s Medicaid Work***

For years, DRM has been at the forefront of efforts to reform, and to redress systemic issues within, Michigan’s behavioral/mental health Medicaid system. DRM’s *Waskul v. WCCMH* litigation, for example, recently resulted in a landmark consent decree with the Michigan Department of Health & Human Services (“MDHHS”) reforming the delivery of a Medicaid service integral to the integration and community involvement of adults with serious intellectual and developmental disabilities. *See, e.g.*, 979 F.3d 426 (6th Cir. 2020) and 2025 WL 304534 (E.D. Mich. Jan. 27, 2025) (approving settlement). The *Waskul* consent decree mandated new statewide policies designed to ensure that recipients receive the services and supports necessary to fully participate and be integrated in their communities. And in DRM’s *D.D. by next friend B.N. v. MDHHS* (filed *sub nomen K.B. v. MDHHS*) litigation, a federal court approved a statewide class action settlement in August 2025 that overhauled the delivery of intensive home and community-based services to children. *See* 2025 WL 2480571 (E.D. Mich. Aug. 28, 2025). The settlement aims

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<sup>1</sup> Including salary, benefits, and indirect costs.

to ensure that children with severe behavioral and mental health needs receive the care they need in the community instead of being sent to jails, juvenile detention facilities, and psychiatric hospitals.

Much of DRM's other recent affirmative litigation and administrative hearing representation has focused on similar systemic failings. For example, DRM obtained a precedent setting appellate decision and six-figure settlement in a 2023 case challenging a Community Mental Health ("CMH") organization's failure to provide authorized services to an individual with severe intellectual and developmental disabilities. *C.B. v. LCCMH*, 349 Mich. App. 253 (2023). A Section 1983 damages lawsuit (which ultimately settled for damages and attorney fees) against individual CMH employees followed when the CMH once again stopped providing services. Targeted administrative hearings have recently resulted in systemic, county-wide fixes of issues ranging from a CMH's inability to authorize services before identifying providers to overly restrictive service definitions.

Outside of behavioral/mental health litigation, DRM brings much of Michigan's systemic Medicaid litigation. Within the last year, DRM's litigation and advocacy resulted in statewide reforms to MDHHS's Private Duty Nursing policies for individuals under 21, removing hourly caps on services and allowing children to receive life-sustaining services. Also within the last year, DRM achieved major statewide reforms to MDHHS's Disabled Adult Child Medicaid eligibility procedures, resulting in hundreds of recipients continuing to receive Medicaid coverage each year without interruption.

DRM's Medicaid work directly and concretely benefits individuals with disabilities, many of whom depend on Medicaid for life-sustaining care, services, and community integration. Due to the intersection between disability and poverty, as well as the low-income nature of Medicaid itself, nearly all of these recipients are well below 200% of poverty and cannot afford to hire an attorney. Legal Services programs do not generally handle systemic Medicaid cases, and the number of Legal Services attorneys representing Medicaid recipients in CMH matters is vanishingly small. DRM is the only organization in Michigan with the litigation capacity and technical expertise necessary to handle these cases.

## ***Funding Need***

Much of DRM's federal funding is used to support its core P & A functions, which include Intake & Referral (DRM receives over 4,000 calls each year), psychiatric hospital/prison monitoring and abuse and neglect investigations, Representative Payee oversight, and education/vocational rehabilitation advocacy and litigation. DRM receives almost no state or private funding. DRM's federal funding does not, and never has, adequately supported DRM's Medicaid work. Only three DRM attorneys currently handle this work, and two of them have significant other responsibilities (one supervises DRM's Intake & Referral department, and the other is DRM's Litigation Director and General Counsel). The third attorney is a two-year Skadden Fellow who was just barred. Lack of resources is the greatest barrier to DRM's continued and expanded pursuit of the Medicaid work that has made, and continues to make, such a positive impact on the lives of Michiganders with disabilities.

Having an additional, experienced, attorney would significantly increase DRM's capacity for the type of Medicaid litigation and advocacy outlined above, and would allow DRM to pursue numerous projects that it currently lacks capacity to undertake. For example, although DRM's advocacy resulted in Disabled Adult Child Medicaid recipients not losing Medicaid coverage when transitioning from SSI to Disabled Adult Child benefits, the problem remains for initial Medicaid applicants and those reapplying due to missing paperwork. Numerous systemic problems exist around Freedom to Work Medicaid coverage, from incorrect premium calculations to inadequate notices. And Michigan's CMHs collectively present more systemic issues than DRM can meaningfully address. DRM was recently made aware of one CMH routinely refusing to provide hearing rights notices when denying service authorization requests. Another CMH makes a mockery of state medical necessity criteria by referring service authorization requests to a third party while withholding all but a small slice of the relevant evidence. A third CMH maintains service waitlists that are expressly prohibited under federal law. All of these are systemic issues that merit the sort of attorney involvement that DRM is currently unable to offer, and which only stand to get worse due to looming federal Medicaid cuts.

## ***Conclusion***

DRM is uniquely situated to identify and successfully litigate systemic issues that impact Michigan Medicaid recipients with disabilities. The private donation offered to DRM presents an amazing opportunity for DRM to continue and expand the Medicaid impact work that directly benefits thousands of Michigan's most vulnerable residents.



## Michigan Elder Justice Initiative

[www.meji.org](http://www.meji.org)

Phone: (517) 827-8010/Fax: (517) 574-5301  
15851 S. US 27, Suite 73, Lansing, MI 48906

April 16, 2026

Jennifer Bentley  
Executive Director  
Michigan State Bar Foundation  
306 Townsend Street  
Lansing, MI 48933

Re: Disability Rights Michigan's Administration of Justice Grant Application

Dear Jen:

Hope you are doing well. I am writing to support Disability Rights Michigan's ("DRM") application for an Administration of Justice Grant. As you may know, I worked for DRM (then Michigan Protection and Advocacy) from 1997-1999 before starting work with LSSCM in 2000. Since then, I have worked very closely with DRM on a wide variety of efforts for older adults and people with disabilities and DRM has been MEJI's closest ally in a multitude of advocacy initiatives. I have been particularly impressed with DRM's groundbreaking litigation against Washtenaw County Community Mental Health (CMH), work which has implications not only for individuals enrolled in CMH but, we hope, for other individuals who receive home and community based services through other Medicaid-funded programs.

There is a pressing need for the systemic Medicaid litigation and advocacy proposed in DRM's application. Indeed, our clients' struggles with CMH have been among the most frustrating of my career. Very few attorneys—in private practice or in legal services—represent Medicaid recipients in the mental/behavioral health system, and even fewer bring the type of complex and systemic Medicaid litigation that DRM has brought over the last ten years. Ensuring access to Medicaid coverage and services meets a critical need for people with disabilities and older adults. Moreover, DRM attorneys have generously shared their expertise to train and collaborate with MEJI and other legal services attorneys in Medicaid advocacy efforts.

I have no doubt that if awarded this grant, DRM will deliver measurable results that will benefit Michiganders with disabilities and older adults. I'm excited about the potential for systemic reforms, pleased that DRM has already secured partial funding for a 5 year Medicaid litigation project, and hope the Bar Foundation can support this work.

If I can be of any further assistance, please feel free to contact me.

Best wishes,

*Alison*

Alison Hirschel

# WAYNE STATE UNIVERSITY

April 21, 2026

Michigan State Bar Foundation  
306 Townsend Street  
Lansing, MI 48933

Re: Disability Rights Michigan's Administration of Justice Grant Application

To the Michigan State Bar Foundation:

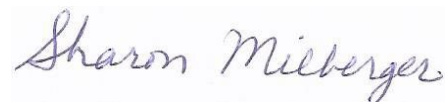
The Michigan Developmental Disabilities Institute (MI-DDI) at Wayne State University is pleased to support the Disability Rights Michigan's (DRM) application for an Administration of Justice Grant. MI-DDI is Michigan's University Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities (UCEDD). MI-DDI's mission is to contribute to the development of inclusive communities and quality of life for people with disabilities and their families through a culturally sensitive statewide program of interdisciplinary education, community support and services, research, and dissemination of information. MI-DDI and DRM are statewide partners, authorized by the Developmental Disabilities Act, who collaborate to support people with developmental disabilities to fully participate in and contribute to their communities.

There is a pressing need for the systemic Medicaid litigation and advocacy proposed in DRM's application. Very few attorneys—private or in legal services—represent Medicaid recipients in the mental/behavioral health system, and even fewer bring the type of systemic Medicaid litigation that DRM has brought over the last ten years. Ensuring access to Medicaid coverage and services meets a critical access to justice need for people with disabilities throughout Michigan.

Having worked closely with DRM for years, MI-DDI can attest that DRM is extremely well-positioned to do this work. Its litigation and advocacy are well known and respected throughout the state, and its staff are professional and hardworking. MI-DDI has no doubt that DRM, if awarded this grant, will deliver measurable results that benefit Michiganders with disabilities.

If you have any questions or require additional information, please feel free to contact me at [smilberger@wayne.edu](mailto:smilberger@wayne.edu) or (313) 577-2654.

Sincerely,



Sharon Milberger, Sc.D.  
Director



Michigan State Bar Foundation  
306 Townsend Street  
Lansing, MI 48933

**Re: Disability Rights Michigan's Administration of Justice Grant Application**

To Whom It May Concern:

The Michigan Statewide Independent Living Council (MiSILC) wholeheartedly supports Disability Rights Michigan's ("DRM") application for an Administration of Justice Grant. DRM and MiSILC are long term, state level partners who continually join forces to advocate for the rights of people with disabilities in Michigan.

There is a pressing need for the systemic Medicaid litigation and advocacy proposed in DRM's application. Very few attorneys—private or in legal services—represent Medicaid recipients in the mental/behavioral health system, and even fewer bring the type of systemic Medicaid litigation that DRM has brought over the last ten years. Ensuring access to Medicaid coverage and services meets a critical access to justice need for people with disabilities throughout Michigan.

Having worked closely with DRM for years, I can attest that DRM is extremely well-positioned to do this work. Its litigation and advocacy are well known and respected throughout the state, and its staff are professional and hardworking. I have no doubt that DRM, if awarded this grant, will deliver measurable results that will benefit Michiganders with disabilities.

Sincerely,

Steven Locke, Executive Director  
Michigan Statewide Independent Living Council

April 16, 2026

Michigan State Bar Foundation  
306 Townsend Street  
Lansing, MI 48933

**Re: Disability Rights Michigan's Administration of Justice Grant Application**

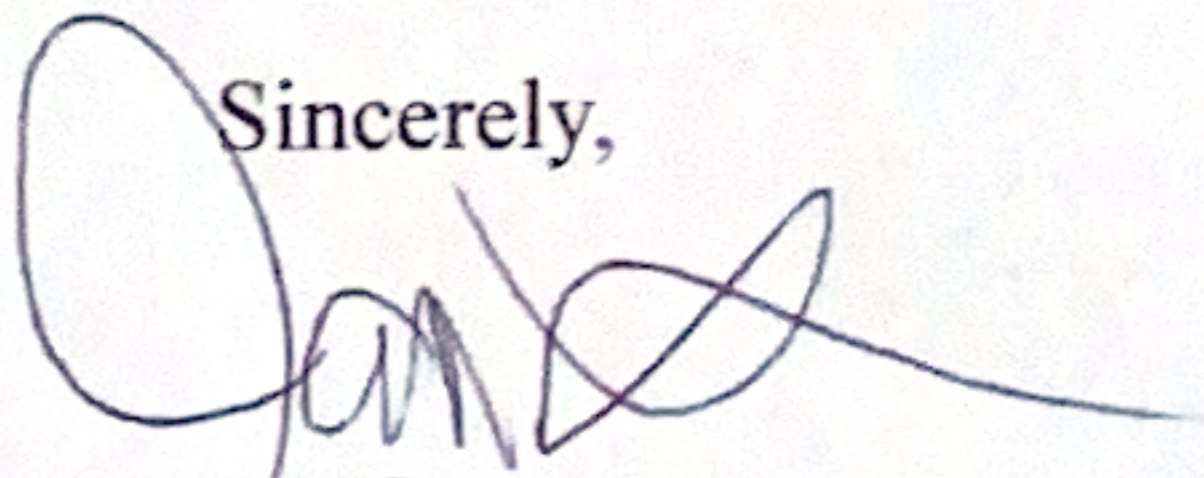
To Whom It May Concern:

I write in wholehearted support of Disability Rights Michigan's ("DRM") application for an Administration of Justice Grant. I have admired the work of DRM for more than 3 decades, but in the last 6 years, have worked closely with them around a variety of important issues. From making sure that people with developmental disabilities had access to medical care during Covid to supporting Self Directed services in the behavioral health system, DRM has been a leader and partner.

There is a pressing need for the systemic Medicaid litigation and advocacy proposed in DRM's application. Very few attorneys—private or in legal services—represent Medicaid recipients in the mental/behavioral health system, and even fewer bring the type of systemic Medicaid litigation that DRM has brought over the last ten years. Ensuring access to Medicaid coverage and services meets a critical access to justice need for people with disabilities throughout Michigan.

Having worked closely with DRM for years, I can attest that DRM is extremely well-positioned to do this work. Its litigation and advocacy are well known and respected throughout the state, and its staff are professional and hardworking. I have no doubt that DRM, if awarded this grant, will deliver measurable results that will benefit Michiganders with disabilities. They already have.

Sincerely,



Jan Lampman  
Community Drive  
2107 Virginia St.  
Midland, MI. 48642  
(989)859-0173



Washtenaw Association for  
Community Advocacy

*Opening Doors to Inclusion Since 1949*

Kristen Columbus, President/CEO Matt Hall, Board Chair

Michigan State Bar Foundation  
306 Townsend Street  
Lansing, MI 48933

April 16, 2026

**Re: Disability Rights Michigan's Administration of Justice Grant Application**

To Whom It May Concern:

I write in wholehearted support of Disability Rights Michigan's ("DRM") application for an Administration of Justice Grant. Washtenaw Association for Community Advocacy ("WACA") is a local chapter of The Arc of the United States, and advocates for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD) in Washtenaw County. WACA has worked closely with DRM, particularly with the *Waskul v. WCCMH* litigation. WACA was a plaintiff on that case and greatly benefited from DRM's legal expertise and dedication to upholding the rights of people with I/DD within Michigan's public behavioral health system. DRM attorneys have also shared information with WACA members about their rights under the Waskul case settlement, and WACA continues to work closely with DRM to ensure that the policy changes resulting from that settlement are implemented properly.

There is a pressing need for the systemic Medicaid litigation and advocacy proposed in DRM's application. Very few attorneys—private or in legal services—represent Medicaid recipients in the mental/behavioral health system, and even fewer bring the type of systemic Medicaid litigation that DRM has brought over the last ten years. Ensuring access to Medicaid coverage and services meets a critical access to justice need for people with disabilities throughout Michigan.

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Sincerely,

Kristen E. Columbus, LMSW  
President/CEO