



Bazelon Center Statement on the Passing of Judge Patricia Wald

The Bazelon Center for Mental Health Law mourns the passing of Judge Patricia Wald, who died on Saturday, January 12 at age 90. Judge Wald was a pioneer of public interest law and one of the Bazelon Center's founders. She made tremendous contributions to disability rights, including through groundbreaking litigation that secured children with disabilities the right to a public education -- ultimately leading to the passage of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). She brought one of the earliest system reform cases establishing the right to community-based services instead of institutional care for people with psychiatric disabilities. Judge Wald was a pioneer in many other ways as well, serving as the first female judge on the United States Court of Appeals for the D.C. Circuit and that court's first female chief judge, as well as enforcing human rights while serving on the Privacy and Civil Liberties Oversight Board and the United Nations war crimes tribunal. Her death marks a tremendous loss for the legal profession and for disability, civil, and human rights.