



September 9, 2019

Bazelon Center Statement on the Passing of Marca Bristo

The Bazelon Center for Mental Health Law mourns the passing of Marca Bristo, the longtime disability rights leader who founded and for decades led Access Living, the Chicago-based independent living center, and served as chair of the National Council on Disability. Ms. Bristo played an enormously important role in the disability rights movement, including being one of the key leaders who helped to secure passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and a pioneer of the independent living movement. She had a hand in virtually every major disability rights policy effort over four decades. Ms. Bristo also helped the world understand that disability rights are civil and human rights. The Bazelon Center worked with Ms. Bristo on numerous occasions, both on court cases implementing the ADA—including the Williams case brought on behalf of thousands of people living in “institutions for mental diseases” seeking to live in the community—and on policy efforts to preserve and advance the rights of people with disabilities. We will miss her deeply, but her legacy will continue to inspire disability rights advocacy for many years to come.