

Judge David L.

BAZELON CENTER

for Mental Health Law

NEWS

The Bazelon Center Welcomes President Obama's Pledge to People with Mental Disabilities on *Olmstead's* 10th Anniversary

Washington, DC - June 22, 2009 - The Bazelon Center for Mental Health Law welcomes President Obama's announcement today of his commitment to the promise of the landmark Supreme Court case, *Olmstead v. L.C.*, on its 10th anniversary. In a statement released by the White House today the President launched a "Year of Community Living" and tasked the Departments of Health and Human Services (HHS) and Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to identify initiatives that will develop and improve services and supports to assist people with disabilities who wish to live in the most integrated settings possible.

The landmark *Olmstead* decision mandated that public services for people with disabilities be provided in the most integrated setting possible, giving them the opportunity to live in the community.

"We are confident that the Obama Administration will move us closer to a nation where people with mental illnesses have access to the services and supports that offer them the choice to live independently," said Robert Bernstein, Ph. D., executive director of the Bazelon Center for Mental Health Law.

Secretaries Kathleen Sebelius (HHS) and Shaun Donovan (HUD) also announced their agencies' commitment to providing funding and implementation plans for programs that will improve access to long-term health and mental health care services and supportive housing for people with mental illnesses.

"We look forward to working with the administration, the Department of Health and Human Services, and the Department of Housing and Urban Development to implement these *Olmstead*-based initiatives to improve the lives and uphold the rights of Americans who have mental illnesses," stated Bernstein.

In a report and call to action to be released on Wednesday, June 24, the Bazelon Center lists a series of actions that should be taken by both the federal government and the states to make *Olmstead* a reality for people with mental illnesses.

To see more on the initiatives proposed by the White House, HHS, and HUD, visit:

http://www.whitehouse.gov/the_press_office/President-Obama-Commemorates-Anniversary-of-Olmstead-and-Announces-New-Initiatives-to-Assist-Americans-with-Disabilities/

<http://www.hhs.gov/news/press/2009pres/06/20090622a.html>

<http://www.hud.gov/news/release.cfm?content=pr09-095.cfm>