

DD Network Update: DD Act Under Attack

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A group calling itself the “**Voice of the Retarded**” (VOR, www.vor.net) opposes Congressional reauthorization of the Developmental Disabilities Act that establishes and supports state DD Networks such as the Virginia Board, the Partnership for People with Disabilities at VCU, and VOPA in the Commonwealth. VOR’s membership includes employees of institutions where individuals with developmental disabilities reside and some parents of those individuals. VOR disagrees fundamentally on DD Act reauthorization and other issues with disability advocates who strongly favor community integration and see the DD Act as vital to its achievement.

In opposing reauthorization, VOR wants Congress to halt all future DD Act funding and to create obstacles to the protection of legal rights created under the Act for people with developmental disabilities. For example, VOR urges a ban on any litigation against facilities that have been certified for funding as Intermediate Care Facilities for Mental Retardation (ICF-MR). They also urge Congress to prohibit bringing an action to protect the rights of an individual with developmental disabilities without permission from a family member or guardian, even if the proposed action is to protect against exploitation by the guardian or abuse by that family member. They are asking Congress to place limitations on the rights of people with developmental disabilities that do not exist for any other kind of disability.

The **Consortium for Citizens with Disabilities** (CCD, www.c-c-d.org), representing more than 100 national advocacy groups, believes that VOR’s proposals to Congress will limit the personal rights of individuals with developmental disabilities to speak for themselves in favor of the rights of others who would prefer to speak on their behalf. In its public statements, CCD notes, “a regrettable part of the history of people with developmental disabilities . . . is that too often the public and private systems that serve them do not serve them well—even engaging in neglect and abuse of individuals—while families, guardians, or ‘other legal representatives’ remain clueless, relying on the very abusers themselves to assure them that all is well . . .”

Virginia’s DD Network, through its national organizations, supports the position of the CCD and believes that the proposals by VOR pose a serious threat to the rights of all people with disabilities and would be a serious step backwards. To learn more about these issues, we urge you to visit www.vopa.state.va.us or contact VOPA directly at general.vopa@vopa.virginia.gov or 1-800-552-3962.

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