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**Disability Rights Montana (DRM) selects new Executive Director,  
expresses gratitude to retiring Executive Director.**

Following a national search, Disability Rights Montana's Board of Directors is excited to announce the selection of David Carlson as its new Executive Director.

Disability Rights Montana is the federally mandated protection and advocacy system for Montana with the mission of protecting and advocating for the civil, legal, and human rights of people with disabilities across Montana, while advancing dignity, equality, and self-determination.

David comes to DRM following 21 years with the protection and advocacy system in Washington state, Disability Rights Washington (DRW). David led the advocacy work at DRW, including monitoring facilities and community settings, investigating potential abuse and neglect, issuing public reports and videos, engaging in both traditional and social media advocacy, conducting systemic legal and policy advocacy, and providing Washingtonians with disabilities information about their legal rights and support in being better self-advocates.

David has served as lead counsel in numerous class actions and other systemic advocacy efforts enforcing a wide variety of civil rights for people with disabilities. David's advocacy work has been recognized in national and international media. He has given presentations on disability legal issues, legal ethics, and advocacy skills around the country. Additionally, David has taught Disability Law as an Adjunct Professor of Law at Seattle University and served as a member of the National Disability Rights Network's Board of Directors and its legal strategy committee.

David graduated Cum Laude from both Eastern Washington University, where he received his B.A., and Gonzaga University School of Law, where he received his Juris Doctorate and served as the Editor-in-Chief of Gonzaga Law Review.

Donna Gleaves, President of DRM's Board said, "We express deep gratitude to Bernie Franks-Ongoy for her 26-year stewardship of our organization and are excited to welcome David to Montana as our new Executive Director. We are confident David's leadership will enhance an already exceptional staff at DRM. Montanans with disabilities will benefit from his experience and leadership."

"As the outgoing Executive Director, I am pleased to leave DRM with a strong leadership in David. Together, David and the very capable and committed staff will lead the next chapter of our remarkable organization" said Bernie Franks-Ongoy, who is retiring in November following 26 years of service as DRM's Executive Director.

David will start at DRM on November 15, 2023.

#### About the organization

Disability Rights Montana is the federally mandated Protection and Advocacy System and Client Assistance Program for Montana, protecting and advocating for the civil, legal, and human rights of persons with disabilities of all ages and across Montana. DRM has the authority to monitor and investigate the provision of services for people with disabilities anywhere in the State. This includes schools, hospitals, prisons, and jails. People with disabilities have a right to be treated equally, with dignity and respect, and should never have to experience any mistreatment, exploitation, abuse, or neglect.

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