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Governor Pritzker Signs Landmark Legislation Creating a Dedicated Department on Disability Rights and Advocacy in Illinois

House Bill 862 transforms the Illinois Guardianship and Advocacy Commission into the Department of Disability Advocacy and Guardianship, effective July 1, 2027

CHICAGO — Yesterday, Governor JB Pritzker signed House Bill 862 into law, creating the Illinois Department of Disability Advocacy and Guardianship (IDAG). This landmark legislation positions Illinois as a national leader in disability advocacy and guardianship by elevating the Illinois Guardianship and Advocacy Commission (IGAC) to a cabinet-level department. "By establishing the Department of Disability Advocacy and Guardianship, we are making it crystal clear that disability rights are a priority in Illinois," **said Governor JB Pritzker**. "I am proud to establish this agency, and I will continue to fight hard to empower people with disabilities and their families all across our state."

Through its three primary divisions, the department will continue to provide critical support to thousands of individuals with disabilities across Illinois. The Division of State Guardian will serve as guardian of last resort for nearly 5,000 adults with disabilities.

The Division of Legal Advocacy will continue to provide legal counsel to thousands of Illinoisians each year in cases of involuntary treatment and related court proceedings, and the Division of Disability Rights and Protections will continue to investigate disability rights violations impacting thousands of Illinois Citizens with Disabilities. A newly established Advisory Council consisting of leaders from across Illinois will provide valuable ongoing input into the department's work.

"People with disabilities matter. I am honored to serve in an agency—and soon a department—whose staff leans forward every day to advocate for solutions that prioritize self-determination and independence, together with our colleagues in Illinois government, direct service providers, families and advocates statewide," **said IGAC Director Tracey B. Fleming**.

"The Guardianship and Advocacy Commission has done critical, life-changing work for decades, standing as guardian for thousands of adults with disabilities, fighting for their rights in court, and investigating violations when institutions fail them. Elevating this to a cabinet-level department sends a clear message: disability rights are a state priority, and Illinois is committed to giving this mission the standing it deserves," **said Leader Bob Morgan (D-58th District), House Sponsor of HB 862**.

"This new department will build on a nearly fifty-year legacy of investment by Illinois in people with disabilities. I am honored to have served as a champion for this agency, and now, to help position Illinois as a national leader in this work for the next fifty," **said Leader Julie Morrison (D-29th District), Sponsor of HB 862 in the Senate**.

"Disability rights require institutional commitment. Elevating this mission to a full department sends a clear message that Illinois is serious about protecting the people who depend on these services most," **said Kimberly Mercer-Schleider, Director, Illinois Council on Developmental Disabilities.**

The new department will begin operations on July 1, 2027.

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About the Illinois Guardianship and Advocacy Commission

Created in 1979, the Illinois Guardianship and Advocacy Commission has built a legacy of safeguarding and promoting the welfare and rights of people with disabilities: providing legal representation, investigating rights violations, and serving as guardian of last resort for thousands of Illinoisans who have often gone without a voice. For more information, visit gac.illinois.gov.

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