

Monday February 7th 2022

Disability Justice Network of Ontario (DJNO) calls for the Immediate Release of Vicky Levack

MEDIA ADVISORY

WHERE: Press Conference over Zoom

WHEN: February 9, 2022, 9 AM EST

On Wednesday February 9, 2022 at 9 AM EST, the Disability Justice Network of Ontario (DJNO) will host a press conference with Vicky Levack calling on the Nova Scotia government to end the discriminatory and inhumane institutionalization of people with disabilities.

Nova Scotia is one of the last in Canada to continue to fully fund and maintain institutions reserved exclusively for people with disabilities. While the shameful days of the “poor house” and residential schools have thankfully ended everywhere in North America, in Nova Scotia, hundreds of people with disabilities who are in need continue to face a life-time of exclusion, segregation, and discrimination in institutions and are deprived of meaningful access to community living.

Vicky Levack, a 31-year-old woman based in Halifax has been unnecessarily institutionalized for nearly a decade for no reason other than her disability. The government has actively discriminated against Levack on the basis of her disability, denying her access to social assistance and services in the community. After 10 years of the government insisting that her needs were “too complex” for the community, following a successful human rights complaint by three other individuals, Levack has now been told that a community placement is in the works.

In addition to the three individual human rights complainants, the Nova Scotia Court of Appeal found that Nova Scotia is systematically discriminating against people with disabilities in forcing them to accept institutions as a condition of receiving social assistance. The government of Nova Scotia has applied to the Supreme Court of Canada in a bid to overturn that decision. As a spokesperson for the Disability Rights Coalition, Levack notes “While the government tries yet another delay tactic rather than seeking out a human rights remedy, people with disabilities in Nova Scotia continue to suffer and be excluded.”

After ten years of fighting, Levack was thrilled to get the offer - the failures to contain the COVID-19 surge, however, delayed this opportunity, without any clear timelines in place or communication with Levack, leaving her trapped in an institutional setting, despite evidence that such institutions force disabled people into increased risk of exposure, infection and death from the COVID-19 virus.

Levack is calling on the government to take action to end the discrimination. “The government calls these institutions ‘homes’ or ‘care’ or ‘centers’ but Covid has exposed the reality that warehousing people with disabilities in institutions increases our health risks and deprives us of full citizenship in our society.”

This call comes a week after DJNO launched its campaign to abolish long-term care in Canada. For more information about the campaign visit: <https://www.djno.ca/abolish-ltc>.

QUOTES:

"I fought hard to win the right to equality, and despite government promises, I am still literally locked away in a nursing home. I feel like a prisoner here and discriminated against on multiple levels, and have been given no clarity on when I will be included in our community." Vicky

--30--

SOCIAL MEDIA:

Twitter: <https://twitter.com/VickyLevack>

Twitter: <https://twitter.com/djnontario>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/djnontario/>

Website: <https://www.djno.ca/>