



## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## Landmark Settlement Improves Sidewalk Access for Wheelchair Users Throughout the City of Long Beach

**Long Beach, CA—April 11, 2017—**A class action settlement agreement to make Long Beach's sidewalks, crosswalks, and other pedestrian pathways safer and more accessible for people with mobility disabilities was preliminarily approved by Judge Dale Fischer yesterday evening. This civil rights victory was negotiated with the City of Long Beach by Disability Rights Advocates (DRA), Disability Rights Legal Center (DRLC) and Goldstein, Borgen, Dardarian & Ho (GBDH).

Under this agreement, the City of Long Beach will construct curb ramps at all locations where they are currently missing within 5 years. Existing curb ramps that are damaged and unusable by people with disabilities will be fixed over the next 20 years, backed by a budget of up to \$50 million. In addition, the City will spend up to \$125 million over 30 years to repair inaccessible sidewalks and crosswalks. The settlement also requires the City to allocate approximately \$5 million over the first 10 years to fix pedestrian barriers specifically reported by people with mobility disabilities. In total, the settlement requires disability access barrier removal work valued at approximately \$200 million. These improvements to the City's pedestrian rights of way, backed by strong financial commitments and policy changes, will ensure all residents of and visitors to Long Beach are able to safely travel and enjoy pedestrian pathways for working, shopping, dining, and more.

In addition to enhancing access to jobs, school and community life for people with mobility disabilities, this settlement will also save lives. Andrew Lee of GBDH says, "This agreement furthers the integration mandate of the ADA and other disability access laws, and ensures that people with mobility disabilities will no longer need to risk their lives travelling in the streets because a curb ramp is missing or a sidewalk is cracked."

Meredith Weaver of DRA says, "These model improvements by the city of Long Beach send a strong message to other cities throughout the country that sidewalk access must be a priority."

Maronel Barajas of DRLC says, "This settlement makes it clear to cities across the country: the right to access pedestrian pathways is guaranteed by federal disability rights laws. Cities must take these laws and their antidiscrimination mandates seriously, or else face similar suits by people with disabilities asserting their rights to access sidewalks and streets."

Cynde Soto, a named plaintiff and longtime Long Beach resident who uses a wheelchair for mobility says, "This settlement will have a huge impact on the daily lives of people with disabilities throughout the city. Thanks to this agreement, we can finally be confident that we'll be able to safely traverse our beautiful city as we shop, dine, visit friends, enjoy community events, and just generally go about our lives."

Plaintiff Ben Rockwell, another longtime resident of the city who uses a wheelchair, agrees. He adds that, "in addition to its benefits for people with disabilities, this settlement will make our city friendlier and safer for all people—including parents with strollers, travelers with luggage, the elderly, and anyone else who travels along its sidewalks and pedestrian paths."

According to Plaintiff Cathy Shimozone, the benefits of this agreement are already beginning: "When I was traveling to the post office the other day I saw that the city had installed a beautiful new curb cut at the intersection of 3<sup>rd</sup> and Elm Street. I've struggled to travel through this intersection for nearly 20 years, and this was by far the easiest trip I'd ever taken. I'm looking forward to seeing similar changes throughout our city, and can't wait to travel our newly-accessible streets."

A copy of the settlement agreement is available at <http://dralegal.org/press/landmark-settlement-improves-sidewalk-access-wheelchair-users-throughout-city-long-beach/>.

### **About Disability Rights Legal Center**

The mission of Disability Rights Legal Center (DRLC) is to champion the rights of people with disabilities through education, advocacy, and litigation. DRLC is one of the oldest non-profit public interest disability law centers that focuses on representing individuals with diverse disabilities. [www.disabilityrightslegalcenter.com](http://www.disabilityrightslegalcenter.com)

### **About Disability Rights Advocates**

Disability Rights Advocates is one of the leading nonprofit disability rights legal centers in the nation. With offices in Berkeley and New York City, DRA's mission is to advance equal rights and opportunities for people with all types of disabilities nationwide. [www.dralegal.org](http://www.dralegal.org)

### **About Goldstein, Borgen, Dardarian and Ho**

Goldstein, Borgen, Dardarian & Ho is one of the oldest and most successful plaintiffs' public interest class action law firms in the country. GBDH represents individuals against large companies and governmental entities in complex, class and collective action lawsuits in the firm's three primary practice areas: employment discrimination, wage and hour violations, and disability access, as well as in other public interest areas. The firm is located in Oakland, California and has a national practice, litigating cases in federal and state courts throughout the country. To read more about GBDH visit: <http://gbdhlegal.com/>