

Lawsuit filed against City of Baltimore over accessibility of curb ramps, sidewalks

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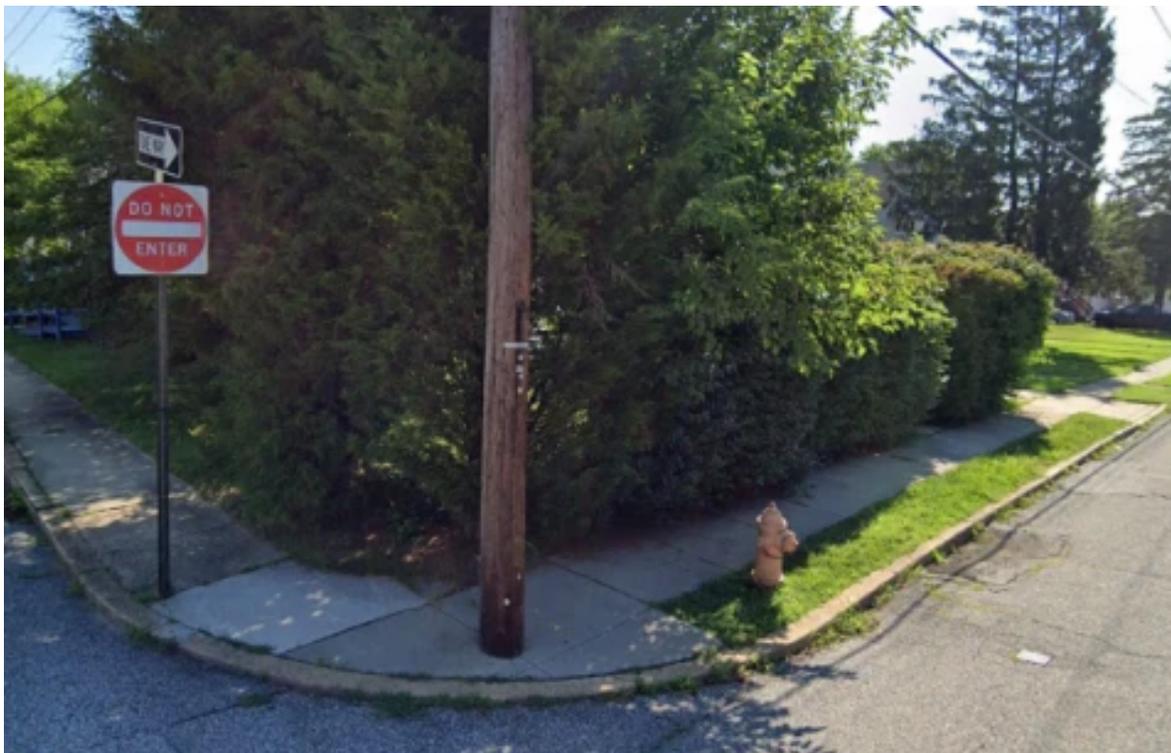


Image: Disability Rights Advocates

A class action lawsuit has been filed alleging widespread and ongoing violations of federal accessibility requirements by the City of Baltimore for its "failure to properly install and maintain of curb ramps and sidewalks."

These violations severely impact the ability of people with mobility disabilities to access sidewalks and curb ramps, making it difficult or impossible for them to fully and equally participate in civic life in Baltimore, according to Disability Rights Advocates (DRA).

The lawsuit claims this lack of accessibility harms plaintiffs Susan Goodlaxson, Janice Jackson, and Keyonna Mayo, all wheelchair users; plaintiff IMAGE Center's constituents with mobility disabilities; and all other persons with mobility disabilities who live in, work in, or visit Baltimore.

DRA says there are no curb ramps at any of the corners of the 3400 Glenmore Avenue block where Ms. Goodlaxson lives, so she cannot cross the streets on her block. Similarly, due to missing and/or inaccessible curb ramps and inaccessible sidewalks, Ms. Jackson is unable to travel by sidewalk on Loch Raven Boulevard to go shopping or access major facilities in the area. Likewise, Ms. Mayo is unable to use sidewalks to travel to the post office or light rail in her area.

Baltimore's own data demonstrate that there are systemic barriers to the accessibility of the city's pedestrian right-of-way, DRA says. In 2019, the city conducted a multi-phase evaluation of its curb ramps. Only approximately 1.3% of the 37,806 surveyed curb ramps were determined to comply with the ADA. Although the focus of the 2019 survey was on curb ramps, notes from that survey document widespread problems with sidewalks, including sidewalks that were damaged or too narrow, which can make them unusable by people who use wheelchairs, scooters, and other mobility aids, so that people with mobility disabilities have to travel in the street with cars.

"It has been more than 30 years since the passage of the ADA. Baltimore should have established procedures to make its pedestrian rights of way accessible to people with mobility disabilities long before now. We expect that this lawsuit will compel Baltimore to make the necessary changes to ensure that people with disabilities can safely use sidewalks and curb ramps," Rebecca Rodgers, Senior Staff Attorney at DRA, said in a statement.

The plaintiffs are represented by the Civil Rights Education and Enforcement Center (CREEC); DRA; Goldstein, Borgen, Dardarian & Ho; and Disability Rights Maryland (DRM).

SOURCE: Disability Rights Advocates