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## **DRMS RESPONDS TO DEPARTMENT OF MENTAL HEALTH FILING**

JACKSON, Mississippi — Following the Mississippi Department of Mental Health’s recent filing regarding federal intervention into the state’s mental health system, Disability Rights Mississippi (DRMS) releases the following statement:

On Friday, the Department of Mental Health filed court papers stating, in part, that “Mississippi is now in substantial compliance with Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act...and has addressed or will imminently address the violations the Court believed to exist.”

The federal government initially issued a letter addressing the state’s failure to provide community and home-based services for Mississippians with mental health disabilities in 2011. For the Department of Mental Health to suggest that change is “imminent” is a wholly inadequate response. To say the state has had ample time and opportunity to address its systemic failure to provide services for persons with mental health disabilities outside of institutions is an understatement a decade in the making.

While it is unfortunate the state could not address the issues at hand without federal intervention and litigation from the Justice Department, the result proceedings have presented the state with an opportunity to make change for the betterment of our state and its most vulnerable citizens. Yet, the Department of Justice’s initial assertions of a lack of adequate care remain unchanged.

“I am tired of excuses, and I think our state is tired of excuses,” said Polly Tribble, Executive Director of Disability Rights Mississippi. “Mississippians with mental health needs are still ending up in jails because their communities lacks services. Folks are still not living in their own communities — and the return rate to psychiatric hospitals is higher than necessary — because the consistency and continuity of home and community-based services around the state is nonexistent. The state lost its battle and it’s time for real change.”

DRMS is hopeful that the judge will intervene in a more proactive way to guide the state on better quality of care, and that the work of the recently appointed Mental Health Accessibility Coordinator will be a positive avenue for change.

DRMS is the federally mandated protection and advocacy (P&A) agency for the state of Mississippi. DRMS’ mission is to promote, protect and advocate for the legal and human rights of all people with disabilities, and to assist them with full inclusion in home, community, education, and employment.