



2026 OHIO DISABILITY POLICY CANDIDATE FORUM

This Forum is Coordinated By:

Center for Disability Empowerment, Disability Rights Ohio, Independence Alliance, League of Women Voters of Ohio, Linking Employment, Abilities and Potential, Ohio Association of County Boards, Ohio Disability Vote Coalition, Ohio Olmstead Task Force, Ohio Provider Resources Association, Ohio Self-Determination Association, People First Ohio, The Ability Center, The Arc of Ohio, The Ohio Statewide Independent Living Council, University of Cincinnati Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities



Welcome to the Disability Policy Candidates Forum

As someone born with a disability who has dedicated her life to disability rights and systems-change advocacy, I know that disability policy is far more than legislation. It affects whether people with disabilities can live a life of their choosing that includes **dignity**, quality health care, a job or career, access to transportation, access to voting, choice of where to live, and **true inclusion** in every aspect of community. Elected officials' decisions can deeply impact people with disabilities and their families.

Nearly 1.7 million Ohioans—around 1 in 6 people—live with a disability or a disabling condition. When you add in all of their family, friends, caregivers, and professionals, and consider that disability is a human condition, you realize that disability issues affect nearly every household. Yet, disability policy often gets overlooked with candidates rarely talking about where they stand.

The Ohio Disability Policy Candidates Forum was created to **spotlight** these issues. During this Forum, candidates will answer questions written by disability leaders across Ohio. This offers everyone a chance to hear where they stand on policies that impact people with disabilities at every stage of life.

Whether you live with a disability, care about someone who does, or simply want to build a more inclusive Ohio, understanding candidates' positions helps you cast a vote that reflects your beliefs and values.

Thank you for being here! Your engagement helps bring disability policy into the spotlight and moves Ohio closer to a future where everyone is heard, valued, and included. Please continue to follow the Ohio Olmstead Task Force after today's event, for further ways to participate in civic engagement.



Jennifer Kucera - Ohio Olmstead Task Force, OhioOlmstead@gmail.com

EVENT AGENDA

Welcome to The OSU Fawcett Center, Columbus, OH

August 20, 2026

11:30 AM - 4:00 PM

11:30 AM	Doors Open
11:30 AM- 12:30 PM	Networking, Vendor Tables and Refreshments
12:30 PM- 12:45 PM	Introduction
12:45 PM- 1:05 PM	Brett Harbage: Voting With a Disability
1:05 PM- 3:45 PM	Candidate's Q&A
3:45 PM- 4:00 PM	Closing Comments

This agenda is subject to change, based on the candidates' availability. We appreciate your understanding.

Register to Vote & Voting Accommodations

How to Register to Vote & Check Your Registration

2 ways to register to vote in Ohio:

- **Online:** Go to voteohio.gov. You'll need to provide both your Ohio driver's license or state ID number **and** the last 4 digits of your Social Security number
- **By mail:** Download and complete a printed application from voteohio.gov and mail the application to your county board of elections

Check and update your voter registration now:

- Even if you're already registered to vote, even if you voted in the most recent election, it's important to check to make sure your registration is up to date
- Go to voterlookup.ohiosos.gov

The deadline to register or update your voter registration for the 2026 General/Special Election is October 5, 2026

The Access Writer allows you to:

- Use a touchscreen to read and mark a ballot
- Enlarge text
- Hear the ballot and instructions through headphones
- Navigate with a handheld controller with tactile and Braille markings
- Connect accessibility switches, including a sip-and-puff device
- Review selections and correct mistakes
- Print a completed paper ballot



A picture of an Access Writer, an electronic ballot marking system with a touchscreen

Your Rights to Accessible Voting

- **Your Right to Accessible Voting Procedures** - to curbside voting, to vote while seated, to receive assistance if requested
- **Your Right to use Absentee Voting** - to submit your vote for any election by using an absentee ballot
- **Your Right to Use an Accessible Voting Machine** - to use the Access Writer, a different accessible machine or a paper ballot
- **Your Right to a Physically Accessible Polling Location** - to accessible parking, to a safe, accessible route to the entrance with an accessible entrance, to a safe, accessible route to the voting area
- **Your Right to submit a report** - if you feel that your right to vote has been denied or infringed upon. (Contact [Disability Rights Ohio](#) to report discrimination)

MAKE A VOTING PLAN



CHECK YOUR REGISTRATION AND/OR REGISTER TO VOTE



LEARN ABOUT EARLY VOTING OPTIONS



EXPLORE YOUR DAY-OF VOTING OPTIONS



RESEARCH CANDIDATES



SHARE YOUR PLANS!



Make your voting plan at lwvohio.org

Absentee/Early Voting

Absentee Voting

Ohio voters can vote from home by requesting an absentee ballot—no reason needed. This allows early, convenient voting and helps reduce both Election Day lines and poll worker strain.

Request an absentee ballot application at voteohio.gov or on your county board of elections (BOE) website:

- Download the application, fill it out and send it back to your BOE
- You'll receive your absentee ballot in the mail prior to election day
- Fill out your ballot – be sure to follow all directions
- Voters need don't need to provide photo ID—just the last 4 digits of their Social Security Number
- The deadline to request an absentee ballot is 7 days before an election; On October 27, 2026 for this year's General elections

3 ways to return your ballot:

- By hand: Return your ballot in person to the dropbox at your BOE or drop it off inside by 7:30 pm on Election Day OR
- By mail: Mail your ballot to your BOE via US Mail– it must be received no later than 7:30 pm on Election Day
- With assistance: Two Board of Election workers will deliver and return your ballot

Early In-Person Voting

Ohio voters also have the option of voting early, in-person at their county board of elections. Visit: voteohio.gov for more information:

- Starts October 6 and includes the two Saturdays and the last Sunday before Election Day
- Voters must have a valid, unexpired photo ID that includes their name and photograph, like an Ohio driver's license or US military ID card

Absentee Voting Options for People With Disabilities

There are Several Absentee Voting Options Available in Ohio for People with Disabilities:

- Vote by mail or with the help of two board of elections employees who deliver and return your ballot by submitting Form 11-G or 11-I
- Request to use a remote ballot marking system by submitting Form 11-G, which allows you to mark your ballot privately and independently
- If you are unable to sign your name:
 - You may appoint an attorney-in-fact, which is valid for completing your absentee ballot only, by submitting Form 10-F or 10-G
 - You may use assistive technology, such as a signature stamp

Please Keep in Mind:

- Request your absentee ballot starting January 1 of the election year, or 90 days before the election date, and no later than noon on the Saturday before Election Day
- You must submit a separate application for each election
- Each of these options requires you to complete a special form
- Be prepared to provide your name, contact information, the last four digits of your Social Security number or your Driver's license/State Identification number or a copy of your passport or Military Identification card
- Some forms may require a physician's signature or be notarized

Go to: <https://www.ohiosos.gov/elections>
Click on "Learn About Absentee Voting"
Scroll down to "Voters With Disabilities"

2026 Candidates For U.S. Senator

Sherrod Brown (Democrat)



Jon Husted (Republican)



US Senators represent Ohio in the US Senate. Each state has two, and they are elected for 6-year terms. Their responsibilities include:

- Opposing and passing federal laws on: Medicaid/Medicare, immigration, civil rights, education, policing, taxes, climate, food & drug regulation, and more.
- Setting US budget on: immigration enforcement, the military, Social Security, Medicaid/Medicare, scientific and technology research, public services, education, and more.
- Confirming US Supreme Court and Federal Judges: these judges decide the constitutionality of federal law in cases regarding voting and civil rights, freedom of speech and religion, personal freedoms, public safety, government power, and more

The Senator and Disability Interests

As Senator, Sherrod Brown historically protected Medicaid from federal funding reductions and supported initiatives intended to expand HCBS. As lieutenant governor, Mr. Husted helped launch Gov. DeWine's Accessible Ohio, designed to help communities, parks, attractions, and public facilities become more accessible.

2026 Candidates For Governor

Dr. Amy Acton (Democrat)



Vivek Ramaswamy (Republican)



Governors are the head of the state executive branch. In Ohio, they are elected for 4-year terms and are limited to 2 terms in office. Their responsibilities include:

- Leading the state: sets state policy on healthcare, housing, human services, public education, transportation, and other issues. Proposes and approves the state budget every other year.
- Can veto legislation and issue executive orders. Serves on and convenes Ohio Redistricting Commission to redraw Ohio's Statehouse and Congressional districts. Appoints state agency leadership.
- Executing laws passed by Ohio's legislature. Responsible for coordinating all agencies in the state's executive branch and supervising state programs. Commands the Ohio National Guard.

The Governor and Disability Interests

The Governor has the power to sign or veto any bill that has great impact on Ohioans with disabilities and disability services. Appoints the leadership of state agencies, such as the Departments of Health, Education, Developmental Disabilities, AGE, and Medicaid.

2026 Candidates For Lt. Governor

David Pepper (Democrat)



Robert McColley (Republican)



Ohio's Lieutenant Governor serves in the executive branch under the Governor. In Ohio, they are elected for 4-year terms with the governor and are limited to 2 terms in office. Their responsibilities include:

- Succession duties: would succeed the sitting governor in the event that the governor leaves office either temporarily or permanently.
- Governor's representative: may attend any official meeting as the governor's representative
- Department leadership: may be appointed as a state agency director or advisor by the governor
- Works on special projects as designated by the Governor to implement the Governor's state agenda

The Lieutenant Governor and Disability Interests

Because the lieutenant governor may be appointed as a state agency director, they can help coordinate disability concerns that may involve multiple agencies, such as the Department of Education and the Department of Health.

2026 Candidates For Attorney General

John Kulewicz (Democrat)



Keith Faber (Republican)



Ohio's Attorney General serves as the state's chief legal officer. In Ohio, they are elected for 4-year terms and are limited to 2 terms in office. Their responsibilities include:

- Representing Ohio in court cases where Ohio has a significant interest. Provides legal counsel to the General Assembly, elected state officials, state departments, and commissions.
- Coordinating with local law enforcement at their request and provides criminal justice support services.
- Approves summary for proposed citizen ballot initiatives.
- Investigation and enforcement authority: enforces Ohio's laws in consumer protection, antitrust, human trafficking, organized crime, fraud, waste and abuse, and nursing home patient abuse and neglect.
- Deciding which issues & cases to prioritize and pursue.

The Attorney General and Disability Interests

The Attorney General's Office investigates and prosecutes fraud in the health care industry and has a Medicaid Fraud Control Unit. The unit also investigates patient abuse and neglect in care facilities.

2026 Candidates For Secretary of State

Allison Russo (Democrat)



Robert Sprague (Republican)



Ohio's Secretary of State serves as the state's chief elections officer. In Ohio, they are elected for 4-year terms and are limited to 2 terms in office. Their responsibilities include:

- Oversight of Ohio elections to ensure compliance with state and federal laws. Appoints and trains election officials in all 88 counties. Chairs the Ohio Ballot Board, which writes and approves ballot language for statewide issues. Serves on the Ohio Redistricting Commission to redraw Ohio's state and congressional districts. Oversees the Ohio Election Integrity Commission, which investigates election irregularities.
- Responsible for licensing businesses and state record-keeping.
- Maintains and provides public access to state government records.

The Ohio Secretary of State & Disability Interests

Oversees, regulates, and enforces the right to vote with reasonable accommodations in Ohio including: curbside voting, assistive technology, accessible forms of voting and accessible voting locations, while voting by mail, in person, or using a drop box for absentee ballots.

2026 Candidates For Auditor of State

Annette Blackwell (Democrat)



Frank LaRose (Republican)



Ohio's Auditor is the state's Chief Compliance Officer. In Ohio, they are elected for 4-year terms and are limited to 2 terms in office. Their responsibilities include:

- Conducting audits all public offices in Ohio, including local governments, schools, public libraries and state universities, and all departments, agencies, and commissions of state government.
- Identifying fraud in public agencies, provides financial services to local governments, and promotes transparency in government.
- Deciding where to direct investigations.
- Membership in the Ohio Redistricting Commission, which has the power to draw state and US legislative district maps.

The Ohio Auditor & Disability Interests

The State Auditor conducts audits of Medicaid recipients in the "Aged, Blind, and Disabled"(ABD) group, specifically to see if they have more countable assets than allowed under federal law.

2026 Candidates For Treasurer of State

Seth Walsh (Democrat)



Jay Edwards (Republican)



Ohio's Treasurer is the state's Chief Fiscal Officer. In Ohio, they are elected for 4-year terms and are limited to 2 terms in office. Their responsibilities include:

- Collecting, investing, and protecting state funds, including most state taxes and fees.
- Tracking and maintaining Ohio's unclaimed property database.
- Issuing of bonds for voter-authorized infrastructure improvement programs and school facilities construction.

The Ohio Treasurer & Disability Interests

The Ohio Treasurer oversees the STABLE Account (ABLE) program, which lets people with disabilities save money without losing important government benefits like Medicaid or SSI.

The Treasurer also oversees the cash flow, investments, and disbursement of specific state-budgeted line items dedicated to pensions or disability support funds.

THANK YOU TO OUR SPONSORS:

Gold Sponsors:

- Anthem BCBS Ohio Medicaid/MyCare
- Franklin County Board of Developmental Disabilities (FCBDD)
- Ohio Association of County Boards (OACB)
- Ohio Olmstead Task Force (OOTF)

Silver Sponsors:

- Center for Disability Empowerment (CdE)
- ElevateDD
- The Arc of Ohio

Bronze Sponsors:

- CareSource
- Creative Housing
- LeadingAge
- League of Women Voters of Ohio
- Ohio Association of Area Agencies on Aging (o4a)
- Ohio Provider Resources Association (OPRA)

In-Kind Sponsors:

- Disability Rights Ohio (DRO)
- Ohio Statewide Independent Living Council (OSILC)

THANK YOU TO OUR EVENT ORGANIZERS:





*Thank you for
attending this year's
candidate forum!*

ABOUT US

Founded by families in 1967, county boards of developmental disabilities were created because no existing systems were able to meet the needs of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD). Today, Ohio's 88 county boards support roughly 117,000 people with I/DD—and their families—across the state.

WHAT COUNTY BOARDS DO

Funded primarily by property tax dollars, county boards provide a wide range of essential supports, including Early Intervention and early childhood programs, educational and family support services, support and service administration, as well as employment training and job coaching, among others. County boards also contribute more than \$650 million in property tax dollars for Ohio's three DD waivers. Many of these services continue throughout a person's lifetime.



USE YOUR VOICE!

*Voting is one of the main ways you can use your voice to impact policies that affect you and your community. To vote, you must be registered 30 days before the next election. For this fall's election on **November 3**, the deadline to register to vote is **October 5**. You can do so at the Secretary of State's website: <https://olvr.ohiosos.gov>. In Ohio, you can vote in person or by mail.*

WANT TO GET INVOLVED?

OACB is looking for advocates! Contact Jake Dowling (jdowling@oacbddd.org) or Alex Lomicka (alomicka@oacbddd.org) to get started.

www.oacbddd.org

OOTF's mission is to advocate, educate, and support change for all people with disabilities by ensuring their rights to participate in a thriving community life.



TO LEARN MORE OR JOIN IN OUR ADVOCACY VISIT:

[HTTPS://OHIOOLMSTEAD.COM/](https://ohioolmstead.com/)

The Ohio Olmstead Task Force (OOTF) is a statewide grassroots coalition of Ohioans with disabilities of all ages, family members, advocates and organizations advocating for the right to live, work and participate in their communities.

Good health to all Ohioans.

We are proud to support The 2026 Ohio Disability Policy Candidates Forum.

At Anthem Blue Cross and Blue Shield, we're always looking for ways to enhance the health and well-being of our members. That's why we invest in and partner with organizations that share our commitment to better, more equitable health care for all.



[anthem.com](https://www.anthem.com)



Ohio **SILC**

Ohio Statewide Independent Living Council



Disability
Rights **OHIO**

Voices Elevated. People Empowered. Equity Achieved.

Call 614-466-7264 or 1-800-282-9181 during our intake hours of
Monday-Friday, 9 a.m. to 12 p.m. and 1 p.m. to 4 p.m.

www.disabilityrightsohio.org



Helping people to live, learn and work in our community

Franklin County DD is a public agency that provides support and services to children and adults with developmental disabilities in Franklin County. From infancy to the school years, employment and beyond, we're there when families need us.



614-475-6440



2879 Johnstown Rd.
Columbus, OH 43219



www.fcdd.org



Connect with us!



fcdd.org



agency video

Eligibility

www.fcdd.org/enrollment/eligibility

- Our agency serves Franklin County residents with a developmental disability that began before age 22. The disability must include physical or intellectual impairments that: are likely to be lifelong; not due solely to mental illness; result in at least three functional limitations in major life areas.
- Early intervention services also are available for children 3 and under with at least one developmental delay or established risk, and for children 3 to 6 with at least two delays or risks.

Applying for services

www.fcdd.org/enrollment/applying-for-services

- Help Me Grow of Franklin County is the first contact for children from birth to age 3 who have a developmental disability, delay or established risk: 1-800-755-GROW
- For individuals 3 and older, the first step is to contact the Franklin County DD Intake Department or complete an online application: 614-342-5490

How we help

www.fcdd.org/about-us/

- Since its creation in 1967, Franklin County DD has been helping people with developmental disabilities live, learn, work, play and engage in their communities.
- Our staff and partners create person-centered plans based on assessed needs and wishes.
- Supports may include early intervention, therapies, assistance with daily living needs, employment, housing, recreation, advocacy and more.



The Center 4 dis-ABILITY Empowerment

CONSUMER-DIRECTED · DISABILITY LED · CENTRAL OHIO

**Every service free.
No waitlist.**

FRANKLIN · DELAWARE · UNION · LICKING

Disability is a Source of Strength. We Build on It.

Free, consumer-directed Independent Living services — led by people with disabilities, for people with disabilities. **Every service. Every age. Every disability type.**

The 5 emPowerment Pillars

1 Information & Referral

Housing, transit, benefits, and healthcare — without the runaround.

2 IL Skills Training

One-on-one coaching: budgeting, cooking, daily living, navigation.

3 Peer Support

Mentorship from trained peers with shared lived experience.

4 Advocacy

Individual rights protection and systems-level changemaking.

5 Transition Services

Nursing home-to-community and school-to-adult life Navigators.



Start Your Journey

Scan to begin your Independent Living Plan

CONNECT WITH US

614-575-8055

info@disabilityempowerment.net

disabilityempowerment.net

4400 N. High St., Suite 102

Columbus, OH 43214

Virtual Peer Support — Mondays, 2:00–3:00 PM EST

"Nothing About Us, Without Us" — the only way we operate.

BELIEVE IT · BECOME IT · BE IT

Advocate. Educate. Innovate.



We are a trusted source for advocacy, access, and support for the developmental disabilities community.

Our Mission

To increase authentic inclusion for people with developmental disabilities by amplifying voices, supporting families, illuminating opportunities, and launching innovative solutions.

Our Communities



learningaidohio.org



adultliteracyohio.org

Leadership Access Scholarship

This scholarship helps people with developmental disabilities and their family members attend eligible Ohio conferences, trainings, workshops, and other leadership events by covering event registration fees. Applications must be submitted at least 30 days before your event begins.

elevatedd.org/leadershipaccessscholarship



Join our mailing list to stay informed on policy changes, resources, and events that impact the lives of families.



elevatedd.org



info@elevatedd.org



[elevatedd.ohio](https://www.facebook.com/elevatedd.ohio)



[elevatedd_ohio](https://www.instagram.com/elevatedd_ohio)



Established 1991
Changing Housing.
Building Hope.

Providing safe, accessible and affordable housing to persons with disabilities.

Affordability +

Providing subsidized housing for up to 1,227 people throughout Franklin County

- 269 Single Family Homes
- 110 Duplex Units
- 184 Apartment Units
- 5 Respite Locations

Private Market Rent Subsidy

Administering income-based subsidies to over 500 individuals living in the community.

Projects & Renovations

Completing over 200 accessibility technology and home modification solutions throughout Central Ohio annually.

614-418-7725

creativehousing.org

info@creativehousing.org



Thank You to Our Disability Rights Supporters:



Sarah Davies
Dee Henry
Sue Hetrick



Jennifer Kucera
Maria Sutter


CareSource[®]
Health Care with Heart



Advocacy. Action. Answers on Aging.



OHIO ASSOCIATION OF
AREA AGENCIES ON AGING

614.481.3511

info@ohioaging.org

LeadingAge[®]
Ohio

Advancing *solutions*
for exceptional *care*
and successful *living.*

Join Us Today!



FAMILY CHOICE PROGRAM

The Family Choice Program is a unique, self-directed program that offers people with developmental disabilities and their families the control of recruiting Direct Support Professionals (DSPs) and in-home coordination of services through the SELF, Level 1, and IO waivers.

NEED AN ADVOCATE?

An advocate from The Arc of Ohio helps families navigate the intellectual and developmental disability system.



ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY

Families and individuals that have a need for Assistive Technology can call The Arc of Ohio for help. Items include tablets, fidget toys, pressure mats and more!



CONTACT
(614) 487-4720

1335 Dublin Road Ste.
104-D
Columbus, OH 43215

info@thearcofohio.org



[illegible]



Thank you for Attending

Use this booklet to keep track of voting information!
Need voting assistance regarding a disability?
Contact Dee@IndependenceAlliance.org or
(513) 241-8046 and you will be referred to your
regional support agency.

#YourVoteYourVoice
#VoterRights