

**DATE: April 24, 2017**  
**CONTACT: Angie Tacker – 404-614-3922**  
**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## **Georgians with Disabilities File Lawsuit Alleging Discrimination by State in Access to Food and Healthcare Assistance**

ATLANTA, GA — Three low-income Georgia residents with disabilities have filed a federal lawsuit alleging that the state of Georgia systematically fails to accommodate the disabilities of some of its most vulnerable residents in its food stamp and Medicaid programs. Each individual plaintiff has lost critical food assistance in the past, **one for three months**, because of Georgia's failure to provide them with individual reasonable accommodations.

The state's failure puts individuals with disabilities across Georgia at risk of losing vital food and health benefits when, due to their disabilities, **they cannot readily comply with the often-complex application and procedural rules required to maintain eligibility for these programs.** The federal Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requires the state to give reasonable accommodations to these individuals, to help them access and keep their benefits.

These accommodations are often very straightforward, such as providing large font documents to a person who is seriously visually impaired, an American Sign Language interpreter to a person who is deaf, or someone to help explain and complete a complex application form for a person with a cognitive impairment.

Nevertheless, Georgia fails to provide these accommodations and does not have adequate, system-wide policies and procedures to ensure that persons with disabilities do not fall through the cracks. The lawsuit alleges that this systemic failure discriminates against people with disabilities and violates Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act.

The problem raised in the lawsuit touches hundreds of thousands of Georgians. In November 2015, there were 255,266 blind or disabled enrollees in Georgia Medicaid, constituting 14% of all enrollees in the state. Likewise, in 2014, approximately 17% of Georgia food stamp households (140,000 households) included non-elderly individuals with a disability. Many elderly recipients are also disabled. The plaintiffs seek to establish uniform, reliable policies and procedures that will ensure that persons with disabilities will receive needed accommodations to help them get and keep these critically necessary benefits.

The suit was filed on behalf of the three plaintiffs by a consortium of lawyers from the National Center for Law and Economic Justice, Alston & Bird, Georgia Legal Services Program, and Atlanta Legal Aid Society.

###