**For Immediate Release**

8/17/2016

**Contacts:** David Card Virginia Knowlton Marcus

202-408-9514 x122 443-692-2482

[press@ndrn.org](mailto:press@ndrn.org) [VirginiaKM@DisabilityRightsMD.org](mailto:VirginiaKM@DisabilityRightsMD.org)

Statement on the Justice Department’s Investigation of the Baltimore City Police Department

WASHINGTON – The National Disability Rights Network (NDRN) and its member organization, Disability Rights Maryland (DRM), are pleased to see the treatment of individuals with disabilities by law enforcement officers included throughout the Department of Justice’s Civil Rights Division’s (CRD) recent investigation into the conduct of the **Baltimore City Police Department (BPD).**

NDRN and DRM support the CRD’s efforts to ensure that government agencies act in a manner that protects the rights of community members with disabilities, and complies with the rule of law. Through their work representing individuals with disabilities, the nationwide network of Protection and Advocacy (P&A) agencies often learn of cases involving negative and sometimes extremely dangerous interactions between people with disabilities and police. These interactions often include individuals with mental health disabilities, as well as individuals with sensory, intellectual, developmental and other types of disabilities; and disproportionately affect additional specific communities, particularly people of color.

The CRD report calls for improvement in the following key areas:

* The failure of the BPD to provide basic reasonable accommodations to individuals with disabilities.

* The failure of the BPD to use common de-escalation techniques on individuals in crisis, resulting in the use of excessive force (e.g. “drive stun mode”), arrest, unnecessary hospitalization, and/or death.
* Deficient training, oversight, and policies to protect individuals with the types of disabilities that officers are likely to encounter in their day-to-day work.

* Lack of collaboration with community partners who may assist BPD in serving individuals with disabilities, thereby avoiding or limiting the need for police intervention.

Negative interactions with police have long been a concern of NDRN and the P&A Network. We hope that the independent voices of individuals with disabilities will be heard clearly, and their needs will stay at the forefront throughout the implementation of the report’s recommendations.

See the full report at: <https://www.justice.gov/opa/file/883366/download>

# # #

*The National Disability Rights Network (NDRN) is the nonprofit membership organization for the federally mandated Protection and Advocacy (P&A) Systems and the Client Assistance Programs (CAP) for individuals with disabilities. Collectively, the Network is the largest provider of legally based advocacy services to people with disabilities in the United States.*

*Disability Rights Maryland (formerly Maryland Disability Law Center), a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, is the federally mandated Protection & Advocacy organization charged with advancing and defending the rights of Marylanders with all types of disabilities, of all ages, statewide.*