



April 6, 2016

## Governor John Bel Edwards Speaks to Advocates Gathered for Disability Rights Day

Hundreds of LaCAN members from every region of the state gathered at the Capitol on Tuesday, April 5<sup>th</sup> to participate in the Council's annual Disability Rights Day. Members formed small teams to visit with their regional legislators sharing this year's message, "We're not an OPTION. We're a PRIORITY," along with fact sheets detailing the importance and necessity of funding for various supports and services that people with disabilities need to live in their own homes and be fully participating members of their communities. Many of these services are in jeopardy of cuts and/or elimination in the proposed budget for Fiscal Year 2017 (FY17) due to the budget shortfall.

At noon members converged on the Capitol steps for a rally program which was highlighted by the first-ever appearance of a Louisiana Governor. Governor John Bel Edwards spoke to the crowd, committing to work to protect disability services, and encouraging advocates to continue their work in sharing their stories and educating him and members of the legislature.

Advocates held signs, cheered, and also heard from keynote speaker, Bambi Polotzola, parent advocate and Executive Director of the Governor's Office of Disability Affairs, Representative Frank Hoffman of West Monroe (District 15) and Senator Gerald Boudreaux of Lafayette (District 24).

Later in the day both Senator Regina Barrow of Baton Rouge (District 15) and Representative J. Rogers Pope of Denham Springs (District 71) brought resolutions recognizing the advocacy efforts of the Council and LaCAN and declaring April 5, 2016 to be Disability Rights Day in the State of Louisiana.

