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FEDERAL COURT ISSUES OPINION, JUDGEMENT AND REMEDIAL ORDER AGAINST PRISON IN NORTH LOUISIANA

This morning, the federal court in Shreveport issued an opinion and remedial order holding that conditions and care at David Wade Correctional Center, near Homer, Louisiana, continue to violate the Eighth Amendment of the Constitution, the Americans with Disabilities Act and the Rehabilitation Act. Today's ruling from the court followed a 14-day bench trial in January and February 2023.

The men who have been housed at David Wade selflessly came forward to share their experiences in support of the effort to change conditions. This litigation was filed in 2018 and hundreds of incarcerated men and their family members have bravely spoken out about abusive conditions of confinement, despite the risk to themselves for speaking up against prison officials. They demonstrated strength, courage, and tenacity.

This is not the first time that the Court has held that conditions on the South Compound at David Wade violate constitutional and federal laws. Yet, as today's decision recognizes, the State of Louisiana has still not corrected the problems. In 2022, the Court found shocking abuses at David Wade, and today's opinion found that those abuses have continued. Some of those include the use of chemical spray against men suffering from severe mental illness; the continued use of "strip cell" status, stripping an inmate of all clothes but a paper gown and leaving him alone in a cell; and strapping prisoners into a restraint bed or restraint chair in their cells, when such restraints should only be used in a hospital setting. Rather than correcting the problems, the State chose to fight this case and spend millions in litigation costs. The Court has now ordered that the State must remedy the unconstitutional conditions and will appoint experts to ensure that it happens. Disability Rights Louisiana is gratified that the Court has today entered an order that should now force the State to remedy the conditions, previously

described as physical and mental torture, and finally provide adequate mental health care, in appropriate conditions of confinement, to men who are incarcerated at David Wade.

Melanie Bray, DRLA Director of Legal Programs and Advocacy and lead counsel, stated, "When people with mental illness are sent to a state prison as punishment for a crime, the state has an obligation to provide baseline mental health care to them. The Court has found that mental health care at DWCC remains below minimally acceptable standards, and that men there are continuing to suffer greatly as a result of the state's indifference. Today's decision affirms that the state did little to correct the conditions of care even after the Court's 2022 ruling finding unconstitutional violations. Now, the Court has ordered the appointment of experts to oversee the remedy of those deficiencies."