

Marlene Sallo:

I think the greatest misunderstanding about disability advocacy is that we are working for a special group of Americans outside of the mainstream. That's not true. Our work is for all Americans because people with disabilities are in every community. We are Black, white, Asian, Latino, and LGBTQ. We are Muslims and Christians and Jews. And disability is a group that any one of us could join at any time. That's why we fight so hard to make America a better place for all people with disabilities. I'm Marlene Sallo, and I am so excited to be the new executive director of the National Disability Rights Network.

For more than 30 years, NDRN has been at the forefront of every major fight for disability rights. Our vision is one in which people with disabilities have equality of opportunity, freedom of choice and self-determination, and the ability to live independently in the community of their choice. In every state and territory are members, the nation's largest providers of legal services and protection and advocacy for people with disabilities, provide a lifeline to people with disabilities who often have nowhere else to turn. Our most important mission is to ensure that they are strong, effective, and ready to continue their critical work.

It is our number one job, and I take it seriously. I come to NDRN with a background as a civil rights attorney, serving the very people our members work with today. But for me, this work is also personal. I am a Cuban exile, a Latina, a single mother, and a person with a disability. All of these identities are parts of me, and they help me understand what it's like to live on the margins. I look forward to being an advocate for our community. I'm here to amplify your voices, to make sure your concerns are heard, and that your needs are met. I look forward to fighting side by side to build a more equitable and inclusive society.