



For Immediate Release

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## Sondra Williams Receives Courage Award from Governor Kasich

OCALI Board Member Honored During the State of the State Address

LIMA, OH – Ohio Governor John Kasich presented Sondra Williams with a Courage Award during his third State of the State Address. The annual award honors extraordinary Ohioans.

Sondra Williams is a member of the OCALI Advisory Board, director of the Autistic Global Initiative Youth Division, and a member of the Autism Society's panel of advisors. She is the author of the book, *Reflections of Self*, a thoughtful and insightful account of her life experiences.

Williams is an adult with autism who spent much of her life misdiagnosed and was institutionalized for several years.

"Sondra is a poet, leader, and change agent who challenges, motivates, and inspires all of us," says Shawn Henry, OCALI Executive Director. "As an individual on the spectrum as well as the mother of 4 children on the spectrum, Sondra helps reframe and redefine what it means to live with autism."

Governor Kasich first presented Courage Awards during his 2012 State of the State Address.

"The Kasich administration continues to demonstrate its support of autism as a top priority in Ohio. Last month's signing of the letter in support of insurance coverage for autism services was a prime example of Governor Kasich's leadership and commitment. OCALI is proud to be part of the continued efforts to help provide supports and services for individuals with autism across the lifespan," says Henry.

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Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD) are a group of developmental disabilities that can cause significant social, communication, and behavioral challenges. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimates that an average of one in 88 children in the United States have an ASD.

OCALI serves families, educators, and professionals working with students with autism and low-incidence disabilities, including multiple disabilities, orthopedic impairments, other health impairments and traumatic brain injuries. OCALI's mission is to build state- and system-wide capacity through leadership, training and professional development, technical assistance, collaboration and technology.