



## **2017-18 Budget Priorities:**

### **END THE WAITING LIST**

Nearly 5,000 Pennsylvanians with intellectual and developmental disabilities continue to endure years on the emergency waiting list, living in heightened crisis situations without access to the supports they have a right to use. The Arc of Pennsylvania calls for funding to support all people with intellectual and developmental disabilities who are waiting for critical services.

The current state budget proposal includes a robust waiting list initiative that will reduce the emergency waiting list by over 20% and provide a waiver for every graduating high school student with an intellectual and developmental disability.

Additionally, Rep. Tom Murt (R-Montgomery) has circulated various cosponsor memos that address funding for the waiting list. Below is the list of bills The Arc of Pennsylvania supports:

- Requiring each slot machine licensee to collect a \$2 per patron admission fee to establish the Intellectual Disabilities and Autism Waiting List Account in State Treasury.
- HB 626 - Imposing an additional \$0.04 tax on cigarettes sold in Pennsylvania to fund the Adult Intellectual Disabilities and Autism Waiting List Account.
- HB 818 - Restoring the 14% tax on table games from 12% to fund programs and services for adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities.
- HB 414 - Establishing a bill of rights for individuals with intellectual disabilities and requiring the Department of Human Services to develop and submit a plan to address the waiting list for community-based services to people with the same.

### **EARLY INTERVENTION FUNDING**

Pennsylvania's Early Intervention Program plays a critical role for children with disabilities from birth to age five. Studies have shown that learning and development are at their highest rate in the infant, toddler and preschool years, and it is essential that we provide Pennsylvania's children with the proper resources to succeed. Early Intervention is designed to lay a foundation that will improve the lives of children and offer greater opportunities for future education and employment. Rates for Early Intervention have not increased in eight years. The Arc of Pennsylvania is asking the General Assembly to provide adequate funding that will cover growing costs to provide these critical services. The current state budget proposal includes funding to serve 1,100 additional children in early intervention.

### **DIRECT SUPPORT PROFESSIONALS**

Direct Support Professionals (DSPs) provide in-person supports that empower individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities to live, work, and thrive in the community; this includes employment, self-care, household maintenance, and transportation support. Despite the level of responsibility and impact involved in the work of DSPs, their average hourly wage is \$11.54 per hour. The intellectual and developmental disabilities service industry is struggling because at this wage rate it cannot attract or keep quality DSPs, which makes Pennsylvanians with disabilities and their families vulnerable to crisis situations. Without an increase in service payment rates in the state budget, providers are unable to raise wages.

The Arc of Pennsylvania supports a wage increase in the state budget for over 35,000 DSPs that serve Pennsylvanians with intellectual and developmental disabilities each day.

## **2017-18 Policy Priorities:**

### **SUPPORT FAMILIES OF PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES**

The Arc of Pennsylvania supports the Office of Developmental Program's increased focus on shifting our service system to make it as streamlined as possible and empowering families to support their loved ones with disabilities at home. Systems that serve children should adequately fund and coordinate supports so that every child grows up with a family rather than in a facility. Maximizing family supports generally keeps people connected in their communities, allows a greater degree of independence and choice, and increases the cost effectiveness of supporting individuals. The Arc of Pennsylvania affirms that people with disabilities are best served: in their community, alongside their peers with and without disabilities, and in a range of settings including living with family, shared living, and living with roommates.

### **CLOSE STATE CENTERS**

The 1999 Supreme Court decision (Olmstead) affirmed a person's right to receive community integrated services rather than live in segregated institutional facilities. A 2015 study from Pennsylvania's Legislative Budget and Finance Committee demonstrates the need for transitioning individuals from segregated settings to the community, and includes recommendations to phase out the remaining state centers. The Arc of Pennsylvania calls on the Department of Human Services (DHS) to end admissions to state centers, publicly post a quarterly list of the numbers of admissions and transitions, and close the five remaining state-run institutions by relocating all residents to community living. To note: DHS recently announced that they will close Hamburg State Center within 18 to 24 months.

- Rep. Kerry Benninghoff circulated a cosponsor memo that requires Department of Human Services to develop a plan to close state centers by January 1, 2023. This legislation requires the Department to implement person-centered plans for current residents, hold public hearings for stakeholder input, use any of the savings that result from closures for home and community based services, and continue to address the waiting list.

### **EMPLOYMENT**

The Arc of Pennsylvania has been implementing ADEPT, an employment project using the Discovery process for students with significant disabilities, since 2013 with support of the Office of Developmental Programs and the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation. The Arc of Pennsylvania applauds Pennsylvania becoming an Employment First state and looks forward to improvements expected by the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act that will create greater access to employment for people with disabilities in Pennsylvania. We urge the Department of Human Services and the Department of Labor and Industry to continue connecting with stakeholders in implementing an Employment First policy.

Various pieces of legislation have been circulating throughout the House and Senate that are focusing on I/DD employment. The Arc of Pennsylvania supports the following bills:

- Rep. Bryan Cutler (R-Lancaster) and Rep. Dan Miller (R-Allegheny) reintroduced their "Employment First" legislation that promotes the employment of people with

disabilities at competitive wages by employers in the Commonwealth. Sen. Mensch (R-Berks) reintroduced the companion bill in the Senate.

- Rep. Jake Wheatley (D-Allegheny) has circulated a cosponsor memo that would provide tax deductions to employers hiring veterans and other individuals with barriers to employment, including recipients of SSI.
- SB 158, introduced by Sen. Christine Tartaglione (D-Philadelphia), would amend the State Civil Service Exam and give people with disabilities additional points on the State Civil Service Exam, which will improve state employment eligibility.

### **IMPROVE SCHOOL CLIMATE FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES**

The Arc of Pennsylvania supports efforts to improve school climate through expansion of Statewide Positive Behavior Supports (SWPBS) that helps reduce bullying, passage of regulations to end unnecessary restraints and seclusion, and promotion of effective technical assistance, training, and least restrictive environment compliance programs. The Arc of Pennsylvania is working to: update the definition of bullying to include cyberbullying, standardize anti-bullying policies in schools, and protect educators who report incidents of bullying.

### **ORGAN TRANSPLANT DISCRIMINATION**

Discrimination against people with intellectual and developmental disabilities being considered for life-saving transplant procedures happens across the United States and in Pennsylvania. Transplant centers can erroneously use neurodevelopmental status as criteria for determining transplant eligibility, even when a person's disability creates no medical impact on transplant candidacy. New Jersey, California, and Maryland have passed laws banning organ transplant discrimination against people solely on the basis of their disability; similar legislation is currently being considered in Delaware and Oregon. Sen. John Sabatina (D-Philadelphia) reintroduced Paul's Law, SB 108, which would prohibit discrimination against individuals with disabilities in need of organ transplants. *To note: The Senate Judiciary Committee unanimously voted the bill out of Committee.*

### **BURDEN OF PROOF ON SCHOOL DISTRICTS, NOT PARENTS**

Pennsylvania has no statute or regulation that assigns the burden of proof to school districts. Most neighboring states (including New York, New Jersey, West Virginia, Connecticut, and Delaware), the District of Columbia, and six other states have legislatively assigned the burden of proof to school districts. Few parents go into this process with the resources or knowledge to properly present their child's case against seasoned professionals representing school districts. The Arc of Pennsylvania supports legislation which would place the burden of proof in special education matters on school districts rather than parents. Sen. Patrick Browne (R-Lehigh) introduced SB 541 that would place the burden of proof on school districts, rather than on the party seeking the relief, in special education hearings.