



NYDA Comments on Proposed Cuts & Call to Action!

On Monday, April 19, New York Disability Advocates (NYDA) released [comments](#) strongly rejecting proposed reimbursement reductions for voluntary providers across the state who are certified by the Office for People with Developmental Disabilities (OPWDD). The proposed actions, which were originally planned to take effect on October 1, 2020, and subsequently delayed to take effect on May 1, 2021, will have significant impacts on individuals with intellectual/developmental disabilities (I/DD) if implemented and result in a \$238 million annualized cut to the system.

The most egregious cuts for individuals and families slash reimbursement to voluntary providers by 50% whenever individuals with I/DD leave to spend time with family or are admitted to the hospital for care. The proposal also imposes an annual “cap” of 96 days of therapeutic leave, after which reimbursement would be reduced to zero, and eliminates the occupancy adjustment resulting from vacancies.

You can send a letter specifically opposing cuts to therapeutic leave days to Governor Cuomo and your state legislator through our online campaign [here](#).

You can also send a letter to Governor Cuomo, your state legislator, and OPWDD Commissioner Kastner to protest **all** the proposed cuts to IRA/ICF occupancy and vacancy rates [here](#).

The Arc New York will continue to advocate against these reductions with partners, stakeholders, families and individuals we support.

US Legislators Send SSI Asset Limit Letter to President Biden

Last week, congressional representatives, led by Senator Sherrod Brown and New York state Representative Jamaal Bowman sent a [letter](#) to the White House calling on the Biden Administration to include several Supplemental Security Income (SSI) priorities in the American Family Plan. The recommendations include:

- Raising benefit levels above the federal poverty line
- Increasing the SSI asset limit and indexing it to inflation going forward
- Updating income exclusions and indexing them to inflation going forward
- Eliminating the marriage penalty and in-kind maintenance and support rules that reduce benefits for those who receive shelter, meals, and groceries from family or friends

Over the past several months, The Arc New York and Arc US have been working to highlight the importance of increasing the asset limits to members of congress, an issue compounded by stimulus payments and unemployment benefits. Individuals who struggle to stay under the asset and resource limit cap are in danger of losing their SSI benefits, which they depend on in their daily life. We will continue keep our focus on building support and finding short-term and permanent solutions to this problem.

Senator Mannion Introduces Series of Bills Supporting I/DD Community

Senator John Mannion, Chair of the NYS Senate Committee on Disabilities recently introduced six bills supporting the intellectual and developmental disability community. The proposed legislation would create a public awareness program to combat the stigma and stereotyping of individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities, supply a list of individuals waiting to receive services to providers, require OPWDD to provide details of any savings and investment initiatives within the executive budget, modify which body appoints members to the Developmental Disabilities Advisory Council, require OPWDD to evaluate the state's emergency response to COVID-19, and require OPWDD to purchase and provide essential PPE in the event of a declared state emergency.

Companion bills are expected to be introduced in the NYS Assembly shortly. We will provide updates and opportunities to voice your support once those bills are assigned and introduced.

- [S6300](#) - Establishes a public awareness program to combat the stigma and stereotyping of individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities
- [S6305](#) - Requires OPWDD to develop and maintain a community residence opportunities waitlist
- [S6292](#) - Requires OPWDD to submit a detailed report of proposed savings and investment initiatives within the executive budget
- [S6293](#) - Relates to the appointment of members to the developmental disabilities advisory council
- [S6294](#) - Requires OPWDD to evaluate the state's response to the COVID-19 state disaster emergency for individuals with intellectual or developmental disabilities

- [S6295](#) - Requires OPWDD to purchase and provide essential PPE to providers in the event of a declaration of a state emergency that relates to public health

President Biden Introduces “Skinny” Budget

On April 9, President Biden's Administration released a [short version of his Fiscal Year \(FY\) 2022 budget](#). This 58 page document covers the President's discretionary spending request and does not include mandatory spending or revenues. It proposes major investments in programs that support people with disabilities. Particularly, it proposes increasing funds for home and community-based services (HCBS) by \$551 million, doubling Lifespan Respite Care funding and increasing Individuals with Disabilities Education Act funding by \$2.6 billion.

Willowbrook Lecture Now Available

Lifelong advocates and members of The Arc New York family brought their voices to the Annual Willowbrook Lecture on Wednesday, April 14. The lecture, titled “[Avoiding the Next Willowbrook: Lessons Learned about Activism from Parents](#),” presents experiences from parents whose children lived at the Willowbrook State School, including what happened to their children at Willowbrook and how these parents became the principal activists in leading the closure of the institution. Parents also shared their activism since, and insights into how to support people with disabilities, parents, students, and families today. In case you missed this powerful presentation, the [recording is now available for viewing on YouTube](#), please feel free to share with family, friends, and on social media.

Help Create a Groundswell of Federal Action

The Arc of the United States launched a grassroots campaign, [#MedicaidCantWait](#). We encourage you to participate and share on social media.

For years, Medicaid, the service system that people with intellectual and developmental disabilities and their families rely on has needed an update. People are stuck on waiting lists, the direct care workforce is underpaid, and too often, unpaid family caregivers are filling in the gaps in service.

The COVID-19 pandemic has magnified these problems and exposed the cracks and gaps in the care infrastructure when it comes to supporting people with disabilities and their families. Tell Congress to support the Administration's historic proposed investment in disability services as part of our COVID-19 economic recovery.

Congress must follow President Biden's lead and fund \$400 billion for the Medicaid home and community-based services (HCBS) system to expand access to HCBS, increase wages for the direct care workforce, and create more of these jobs.

Tell Congress we need:

- A \$400 billion investment to fund expanded access to Medicaid HCBS to people with disabilities on waiting lists and address the direct care workforce crisis, including raising wages.
- A national paid leave program to ensure that people with disabilities, family caregivers, and direct care workers don't have to choose between their own health, the health of their families, and their livelihood.
- Improvements to Supplemental Security Income benefits and asset limits to lift people out of poverty.

[Take action today!](#)

AHRC Symposium: Eliminating Compounded Disparities for People with Disabilities

AHRC New York City, a Chapter of the Arc New York, and their partners will host a symposium on Friday, May 14, from 8:30 - 4:30 PM titled, A Call to Action: Eliminating Compounded Disparities for People with Disabilities in a Year of COVID-19.

Focusing on Lived Experience, this Symposium will explore the Intersectionality of Disability, Race, Ethnicity, Culture, Gender Identities, and the Political Determinants of Health and provoke a deeper discussion, a greater sense of shared responsibility and a better-defined road map for future action in partnership with people with disabilities.

Learn more and register [here](#).

Arc US Webinar: Fundraising Events for the Future

The Arc US Webinar Series is a new initiative introducing quarterly webinars that showcase successes of chapters of The Arc and leaders in the disability field. Participants will learn about new programs, systems, and organizational processes that may be beneficial to your community and organization.

The inaugural webinar, "Fundraising Events for the Future," will be held April 29 from 2:00-3:00 PM. Presenters Josh Leik and Jim Poster from The Arc of York County will talk about how they increased their chapter's fundraising efforts by 60% in just one year. Participants will learn about:

- Adjustments they had to make during COVID
- The difference between sponsorship and underwriting
- Strategies to keep sponsors engaged
- How they utilize their board to help thank larger sponsors

Register [here](#) to learn how you can boost your chapter's fundraising efforts!