

## Governmental Affairs Update

The Arc of New Jersey advocated at the State House last month, along with fellow members of the Coalition for a DSP Living Wage, regarding the impacts a proposed \$15 minimum would have on the Direct Support Professional workforce. It is important for legislators to remember that providers are unable to pass along the cost of a higher minimum wage to consumers and so funding to accommodate an increase must come from the state. In addition, we emphasized to lawmakers that DSPs are not minimum wage workers and starting salaries must be kept above the state's minimum wage in order to compete with entry-level jobs.

Also in October, The Arc of New Jersey supported a number of bills making their way through Committee. This included A3514 which would establish a caregiver task force to evaluate and provide recommendations on caregiver support services in the state. If enacted, The Arc of New Jersey would be among the named task force members. The legislation was voted out of the Assembly Budget Committee and then received unanimous approval from the full Senate. Additionally, The Arc of New Jersey testified in support of AJR53 which designates October of each year as Disability Employment Awareness Month. This was an opportunity to talk to legislators about fostering employment opportunities, providing the proper supports and services for success and creating integrated and inclusive work environments for all. The bill received unanimous support from the Committee.