

Governmental Affairs Update

The Arc of New Jersey's Executive Director Tom Baffuto highlighted the need to increase wages for Direct Support Professionals and raise the day program rate when he testified at the Department of Human Services (DHS) Budget Listening Session last month. The Listening Session was an opportunity to provide feedback to the Department about funding priorities in the Fiscal Year 2022 Budget. Tom thanked the leaders of the DHS for last year's DSP wage increase, but warned more funding will be needed in FY22 as the state's minimum wage is set to rise again next January. The state must appropriate funding for DSPs in order to keep the salaries of this workforce ahead of upcoming minimum wage bumps. Additionally, Tom urged the Department to reinstate the \$20 million from the Governor's originally proposed FY21 State Budget to increase the day program rate. That funding was intended to address missed program days and the resulting financial difficulties incurred by providers, but it was not included in the revised FY21 Budget signed by the Governor in September.

On Tuesday, January 12, 2021, Governor Phil Murphy will deliver the annual State of the State Address to give residents of New Jersey a recap of the past 12 months and a preview of accomplishments he aims to achieve in the New Year, including some potential Budget priorities. Keep a look out in the weeks and months ahead for ways you can support The Arc of New Jersey's State Budget advocacy efforts.