

## Governmental Affairs Update

### Budget News

The Arc of New Jersey spent the month of March advocating to increase wages for the Direct Support Professional workforce in the Fiscal Year 2019 Budget. In our continued role as Chair of the Coalition for a DSP Living Wage, The Arc of New Jersey testified before the Senate and Assembly Budget Committees and urged legislators to add an appropriation to address this very critical issue. Our goal this year is to raise the wage by \$1.25 an hour. Executive Director Tom Baffuto was joined in the Assembly by Erika Fortune, a DSP from The Arc of Camden who told legislators how much she loves the work that she does, but how difficult it is to earn such a low wage. In the Senate, Tom was joined by Rene Leyva, a DSP from The Arc of Hudson who also explained how much he enjoys helping people with I/DD but that his wage of less than \$11 an hour makes it hard for him to pay his bills. To read recent letters to the editor about our ongoing work to increase wages for DSPs, click [here](#) and [here](#).

If you are not already, please be sure to follow the [Coalition for a DSP Living Wage Twitter page](#) for all the most up to date news and information.

In addition to funding for DSPs, The Arc of New Jersey asked legislators to maintain increased funding in the Governor's proposed budget for home and community based services as well as autism spectrum disorder services for Medicaid-eligible youth.

### Legislation

Also in March, The Arc of New Jersey testified before the Assembly Human Services Committee in support of Assembly Joint Resolution 104 which condemns proposed changes to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). Executive Director Tom Baffuto spoke about how some members of our DSP workforce must rely on public assistance programs, including SNAP, because their wages are so low. He also spoke about individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities who rely on SNAP benefits and the negative impacts of any potential cuts.