The Arc of New Jersey

Achieve with us.

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Governmental Affairs Update

On June 30, Governor Murphy signed the $50.6 billion budget bill into law, a spending plan which includes a full payment to the state worker pension fund, bigger property tax rebates and a surplus of more than $6 billion. Executive Director Tom Baffuto was honored to attend the budget bill signing that took place in Cranford. In addition to the Governor, the event was attended by many important dignitaries from the Legislature, including the Senate President and Speaker of the Assembly. The Arc of New Jersey would like to thank and acknowledge both the Governor and the Legislature for another State Budget that addresses many of the funding priorities for individuals with IDD, their families, and Chapters of The Arc. The FY23 Budget has an astounding amount of dollars earmarked for those we represent – more than $100 million across the Division of Developmental Disabilities in new, state dollars, the majority of which will receive federal matching dollars via Medicaid.

We were especially pleased that the Governor included $41 million in state dollars (which will receive a federal match) to increase wages for the Direct Support Professional workforce. This money will also raise wages for supervisors and managers, thus avoiding compression issues. DSPs have been a top tier priority for our organization for many years and we are happy to see the Governor proactively appropriating money for this issue in his original proposal to the Legislature, which signifies an important acknowledgement of the workforce and the need for higher wages. This increase will go into effect January 1, 2023, which lines up with New Jersey's next minimum wage increase.

Additionally, the FY23 Budget includes money to fully annualize the day habilitation funds appropriated in FY22 which is an important recognition of day program providers. The FY23 Budget also annualizes rate increases we advocated for in the FY22 Budget. This includes rate increases for Supported Employment, Support Coordination and Early Intervention. The Budget also addresses the need of those awaiting services. The Budget includes funding to double the number of people moved off the Waiting List, increasing the number from 200 people in FY22 to 400 people in FY23.

There is also $8.2 million to support individuals with IDD with complex needs who are receiving care out of state and approximately $9 million for renovations at Hunterdon Developmental Center. Finally, the Budget includes funding for a new, virtual Disability Information Hub that will help individuals with disabilities better plan for their future by providing up-to-date and accessible information about disability services in a central location.

Added to the Budget by the Legislature is a small increase to the residential rates ($7.5 million) and $4.3 million for respite in the Department of Children and Families. These funds will be used to provide additional, one-time respite services for youth with intellectual and developmental

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disabilities and their families who are eligible for services through the Children's System of Care. This line item is being funded with monies from the American Rescue Plan. We are very glad to see the Legislature recognized our advocacy on this matter and that the Governor maintained the legislative add-on. (We are also simultaneously advocating for A1902 which appropriates $13 million to increase respite hours for children with IDD and their families served via DCF. The legislation was approved by the full Assembly with unanimous support on June 29. We will continue pushing for the passage of the bill when the Legislature reconvenes in the fall.)

The Arc of NJ thanks everyone who supported our FY23 Budget advocacy. Making your voice heard is a critically important to our work and the reason why IDD priorities are reflected in the spending plan.