
Governmental Affairs Update

The Arc of New Jersey is happy to report that the revised Fiscal Year 2021 Budget signed by Governor Murphy on September 29, 2020, includes \$40 million to increase wages for Direct Support Professionals (DSPs) while also avoiding any cuts to services and supports for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. To read our Budget update, [click here](#).

In legislative news, two bills impacting people with intellectual and developmental disabilities were advanced by the Senate and the Assembly last month, and they now await action by the Governor. This includes:

S2517/A4208 – the bill aims to reform the state's system of providing paratransit services. Its goal is to provide more efficient transportation services for individuals with I/DD and it requires the establishment of a best practices pilot training program for paratransit providers. The bill is based on a successful transportation model spearheaded by The Arc Mercer. The Arc of New Jersey testified in support of the legislation when it was voted on in Committee.

S864/A1978 – this bill limits the use of single-use plastic bags and paper bags. While the legislation was still making its way through the Senate and the Assembly, The Arc of New Jersey reached out to the bill sponsors to emphasize the importance of plastic straws for individuals with I/DD who depend on them for hydration. We urged legislators to amend the bill to ensure restaurants maintain a supply of plastic straws and that they are available upon request for patrons who need them in order to drink. The bill was amended to reflect our concern. If signed, the law will go into effect in 18 months.

Governor Murphy will now decide whether to sign the bills into law, veto them entirely, or conditionally veto them. A conditional veto means the Governor objects to parts of a bill and he proposes amendments that would make it acceptable. If the Legislature re-enacts the bill with the recommended amendments, it is presented again to the Governor for signature.

On the federal level, The Arc of New Jersey continues to urge members of Congress to support people with I/DD and their families in any future COVID relief bill. [Click here](#) to view the most recent action alerts from The Arc of the United States.