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## **Governmental Affairs Update**

In March, The Arc of New Jersey's Executive Director Tom Baffuto and Immediate Past President Bob Hage testified before the Senate Budget Committee to support the Governor's proposals for Direct Support Professional wage increases and additional funding for day program services. We also advocated for the Legislature to include rate increases for Early Intervention Services which have not gone up in 15 years. Bob spoke about his family's experience with the Early Intervention System and how critical those supports are to babies and toddlers with developmental delays. Due to COVID-19, the Assembly Budget Committee canceled their in-person hearings scheduled for March, but The Arc of New Jersey still weighed in by submitting testimony electronically.

Also in March, members of the New Jersey Self-Advocacy Network met with Department of Human Services Commissioner Carole Johnson and senior members of her team to advocate on issues impacting their lives. This was an important opportunity to communicate with the Department and Self-Advocates appreciated the chance to make their voices heard.

Also in March, The Arc of New Jersey supported efforts led by The Arc US to ensure the disability community is included in pandemic response legislation. We reached out to members of New Jersey's congressional delegation and shared action alerts with our networks to push for provisions to support people with disabilities, family caregivers and the Direct Support Professional workforce. [Visit this blog](#) from The Arc US to stay up to date on further federal news and info.