

Public Policy Update from Katy Neas, CEO, The Arc of the United States

Congress is officially on recess until after Labor Day, but the past several weeks have been choked full of public policy activity in education, Medicaid, SNAP, Social Security, Civil Rights and more.

Education: Throughout July, The Arc continued to push back against the harmful dismantling of the Department of Education. I participated in a press event hosted by Senator Patty Murray (D-WA) and a hearing hosted by Senator Mazie Hirono (D-HI) regarding the harmful effects of moving OSERS (Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services) to the US Department of Health and Human Services. The Arc staff also presented a webinar with the Educating All Learner's Alliance (EALA) on the recent actions at ED. <https://educatingalllearners.org>

The Senate Health Education Labor and Pensions (HELP) Committee on July 30 advanced a bill to reverse the inter-agency agreement that moves OSERS to the Department of Health and Human Services. Two other disability related bills, The RISE Act and the 21st Century Dyslexia Act were also advanced. The Arc supports The RISE Act which would allow improve the college accommodations process for students with disabilities. The Arc opposes the 21st Century Dyslexia Act because it would make it more difficult for students with intellectual and developmental disabilities who may also have dyslexia to receive appropriate services. The Arc staff worked closely with the HELP committee to make sure the disability perspective was included. The Arc staff participated in more than 25 Hill meetings with HELP committee members to share our perspectives.

Medicaid: we developed a comprehensive suite of Medicaid advocacy resources to help chapters, Self-Advocates, families, and partners respond to the new Medicaid work requirements rule. Resources included a detailed policy analysis of the CMS Interim Final Rule (IFR), a comparison of H.R. 1 and the IFR, scenarios illustrating how people with disabilities and family caregivers could be affected, state-specific template comments, plain language fact sheets and blogs, and an online public comment portal to facilitate comment submission. All can be found at www.thearc.org/advocacytoolkits We also hosted Medicaid Office Hours to walk state chapters through the rule, answer implementation questions, and provide technical assistance as affiliates prepared comments ahead of the July 31 deadline.

SNAP: The Arc tracked the status of the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) in Senate Agriculture Committee's work on the Farm Bill, updated key advocacy

materials, and compiled other policy materials to prepare for the future committee action. The Arc's policy goal is to reverse the cuts applied to SNAP in last year's budget law.

Social Security: The Arc sent a letter to members of The House of Representatives opposing H.R. 8884, the Removing Barriers to Work for Disabled Americans Act. The letter explains how the bill could undermine funding for the Social Security Administration and does not have adequate safeguards to protect Social Security Disability Insurance beneficiaries' total benefits.

The Arc sent a letter to the Senate in support of the reintroduction of S. 5006 The Work Without Worry Act. The bipartisan bill would eliminate a harsh work penalty impacting Social Security Disabled Adult Child (DAC) beneficiaries.

The Arc continued to advocate for S. 1234/H.R.2540 The SSI Savings Penalty Elimination Act. In July, support for the bipartisan bill picked up momentum, and six new senators joined the bill, including: Sen. Justice [R-WV], Sen. Gillibrand [D-NY], Sen. Husted [R-OH], Sen. Durbin [D-IL], Sen. Cruz, and Sen. King [I-ME].

Disability Program Funding: The Arc submitted comments on a proposed rule on the process for funding federal grants. This rule would insert a new requirement that all grants that had been selected for funding through a non-partisan peer review process had to be approved by political appointees who may or may now have any knowledge or expertise in the purpose of the grant. The Arc opposed this proposed rule because it endangers the ability of nonprofit organizations to administer grants, creates uncertainty, and gives political appointees extensive power over the awarding of grants.

Advocacy

We are more than half-way to our goal of 275,000 advocacy actions, with 155,20 in hand by the end of July. Here are some of the highlights!

- We organized twenty advocates to attend the Senate HELP Committee markup discussing the move of the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services to the US Department of Health and Human Services, with cheers to The Arc of MD, VA, and NOVA for joining us!).
- We launched Medicaid work requirements comment portal to advocate against harmful changes to Medicaid. We generated 1,906 unique/edited comments.

- We co-hosted National Townhall on Medicaid Work Requirements with partner organizations including Caring Across Generations, Little Lobbyists, and American Association of People with Disabilities. Nora Bent from The Arc of Massachusetts spoke on the call, and it was attended by 299 advocates.
- The July National Council of Self-Advocates (NCSA) meeting topic was about August Recess. We had over eighty attendees. We also held an NCSA Officer meeting where our NCSA leaders determined the topics for future NCSA meetings. NCSA leaders have represented staff members of The Arc for 70% of our meetings.
- We organized chapter advocacy & policy updates online seminar (July 29).
- **Martha's Medicaid video** was viewed over 220,000 times on social media. We generated almost two hundred actions on this post.

Legal Advocacy

Three additional states have withdrawn from the lawsuit *Texas v. Kennedy*. This lawsuit was started by seventeen states who wanted the federal government to abandon regulations from the Biden Administration that strengthened access to health services for people with disabilities. Thanks to disability community advocacy, including from chapters of The Arc, three more states have dropped off this case: Louisiana, Montana, and Missouri. Only three states—Texas, Florida, and Alaska—remain as plaintiffs in the lawsuit which began with seventeen plaintiff states in the fall of 2024.

The Arc's legal team continues to monitor the fallout from the Department of Justice's legal opinion regarding enforcement of the US Supreme Court's 1999 ruling in *Olmstead vs L.C.*, speaking to the media about the impact of the memo, coordinating with chapters on advocacy with their states, and monitoring active *Olmstead* cases and settlements for post-memo developments. The Arc's blog was revised with added information. <https://thearc.org/blog/doj-opinion-on-olmstead-threatens-the-right-of-people-with-disabilities-to-live-in-the-community/>

The Arc's legal advocacy team has published a [Supreme Court explainer](#) summarizing four cases from the 2025-26 term and explaining their impact on the disability community.