A rate study completed over a year ago showed there is a marked difference between the state budget allocation for Developmental Disabilities services and the amount of funding that the system needs to ensure fair, equitable, accessible, and quality community-based services for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) and their families.

The Department of Health committed to “phasing in” the needed increases to funding for the system over time, but this plan is unacceptable. **We need full funding of the DDA Rate Study now.** Many people with IDD have waited on the DDA Waiting Lists for decades. People with disabilities and their families should not have to wait for the state to provide adequate funding for their critical services which enable them to live and work in the community. We have a Provider capacity shortage in the state and a deepening **Direct Support Professional Workforce Shortage** that must be addressed through funding and other state assistance.

**Public Policy Priorities 2023 Legislative Session**

**Funding for Developmental Disabilities Services and Supports**

A rate study completed over a year ago showed there is a marked difference between the state budget allocation for Developmental Disabilities services and the amount of funding that the system needs to ensure fair, equitable, accessible, and quality community-based services for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) and their families.

The Department of Health committed to “phasing in” the needed increases to funding for the system over time, but this plan is unacceptable. **We need full funding of the DDA Rate Study now.** Many people with IDD have waited on the DDA Waiting Lists for decades. People with disabilities and their families should not have to wait for the state to provide adequate funding for their critical services which enable them to live and work in the community. We have a Provider capacity shortage in the state and a deepening Direct Support Professional Workforce Shortage that must be addressed through funding and other state assistance.

**Equity in Access to Developmental Disabilities Services and Supports**

We examine statutes, waivers, regulations, policies, procedures, and funding, and advocate for changes to improve equity and access for all people with IDD. We focus on the needs of all people with IDD with a special lens on the needs of individuals who do not use words to communicate, speak in a language other than English, and individuals who have intensive healthcare and/or direct nursing service needs.

We are working to ensure funding and policies improve and support access to services for people with complex needs to be supported in communities and settings of a person's choice. This includes advocacy work to restore direct community-based nursing services and supports to the DDA waivers so people are not relegated to institutions like nursing homes for care that could be safely provided in the community and less costly to the state.

We advocate for the equitable inclusion of underserved populations in our systems of support and a responsive Developmental Disabilities Administration; providing needed outreach, resources, services, and supports in a language people can understand.

**DDA Waiting List and Autism Waiver Registry**

The End the Wait Act of 2022 requires the Maryland Department of Health to develop a plan to reduce waiting lists for each of its waiver programs and the Autism Registry by 50%, beginning in FY24, and calls on the Governor to include an appropriation for service expansion in the annual state budget.

We advocate for elimination of the DDA Waiting List and Autism Registry through full funding for eligible individuals in need of community services and supports. It is often 10+ years before a person on the Waiting List can access services.

Research supports that early intervention is the key to the success of a child with autism, and reduces the likelihood that children will need extensive supports as they age. The Autism Waiver registry is more than 6,000 children long. Children wait over 8 years on the list before they are evaluated to receive services. Some age out of the program before they can access services.

We need full funding for the End the Wait Act to be implemented as intended, an examination of Provider capacity to support people, and a change in how children on the Autism Waiver Registry are evaluated for eligibility to improve timeliness and access to services.

**Transitioning Youth**

We need continued commitment for full funding of the Governor’s Transitioning Youth Initiative. This is funding to ensure that youth with IDD in Maryland, who exit high school in the year after their 21st birthday, can transition into adult services and supports. This is important so young adults with IDD have the services and supports they need for employment, life-long learning, and/or higher education.

Unfortunately, not all Local Education Agencies (LEAs) ensure families and students with IDD are involved in the transition process from the age of 14, as required by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). Not all families and people with IDD have access to timely information, in a language they understand, to prepare for a seamless transition to adult life. This needs to change.

We need meaningful high school opportunities for students with IDD that prepare them for adult life and employment. People with IDD need community support coordination and assistance, and the opportunity for true choice of Provider-supported or Self-Directed service models.
We must work together to increase safe, affordable, and accessible housing so people with IDD can live in inclusive communities of their choice. We advocate for DDA and other state departments to allocate resources to address housing support needs of people with IDD, and increase the number of accessible and affordable housing units throughout the state. We advocate for enforcement and oversight of fair housing laws to end discrimination against people with IDD based on source of income or perceived disabilities/accommodation needs.

The Arc recommends the state commit to a plan and timeline to close the remaining institution for people with IDD (Holly Center) and provide individualized, safe, community-based services to the people currently living there. We oppose the expansion of State Residential Centers (SRCs) and new admissions including respite care.

We advocate for individuals under guardianship to have regular information on their rights. With consideration to the fact that some individuals in society require the assignment of a guardian to ensure health and safety, The Arc advocates for the rights of individuals to have alternatives to guardianship fully explored prior to a guardianship assignment. Supported Decision Making is now included in the law, and a viable option for many to have independence and autonomy while still receiving support for decisions.

We advocate for enforcement of the ADA and other Civil Rights laws.

We support police training efforts that reduce stigma, increase safety, and inspire relationships of acceptance and support for all Marylanders. The Ethan Saylor Alliance for Self Advocates was created in 2015, along with a requirement that police cadets receive training to effectively interact with individuals with IDD. Since then, funding for Alliance work has stagnated. To meet the need in the state for training and awareness, we advocate for additional funding and support for the Alliance.

We advocate for the acknowledgment of the rights of people with disabilities in the community. Law enforcement and court personnel should receive specific training on the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

The Arc recommends the state commit to a plan and timeline to close the remaining institution for people with IDD (Holly Center) and provide individualized, safe, community-based services to the people currently living there. We oppose the expansion of State Residential Centers (SRCs) and new admissions including respite care.

With consideration to the fact that some individuals in society require the assignment of a guardian to ensure health and safety, The Arc advocates for the rights of individuals to have alternatives to guardianship fully explored prior to a guardianship assignment. Supported Decision Making is now included in the law, and a viable option for many to have independence and autonomy while still receiving support for decisions.

We advocate for individuals under guardianship to have regular information on their rights. We would like our guardianship statutes to require a periodic guardianship review, and exploration of less restrictive alternatives.

We advocate for enforcement of the ADA and other Civil Rights laws.