

A

Communication
from the Policy
Information Exchange

Slice of Pie

A *Slice of Pie* is an ongoing publication keeping our readers informed about important public policy issues. It is the mission of the Policy Information Exchange to **educate and inform Pennsylvanians with disabilities, their families and advocates, and the general public, regarding public policy issues and to further the exchange of policy information between the Pennsylvania Developmental Disabilities Council and federal, state and local policy makers.**

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STATE NEWS

PENNSYLVANIA BUDGET

On June 30, 2021, Governor Wolf signed into law a \$40.8 billion budget for the Commonwealth for the Fiscal Year 2021-2022 that begins on July 1, 2021. The enacted budget is an 11.13% increase over FY 20-21 and funds Pennsylvania’s operations through June 30, 2022. Below is a list of the enacted appropriations the fiscal year total, and the change from the FY 20-21 available funds (including supplemental funding adjustments). For many Medicaid-funded programs, the actual net total increase or decrease is masked by COVID funds available in FY 20-21 and FY 19-20 that supported these programs during the pandemic. In addition, the full impact of the use of Federal American Rescue Plan funds is not yet clear, as it may span three state fiscal years. The proposed and enacted budgets are available here: [PA State Budget Bills](#).

Department of Human Services

- **Early Intervention Services:** \$172,657,000, an increase of \$22,188,000 over FY 20-21 revised available funding due to (\$27,958,000) supplemental appropriation
- **Intellectual Disabilities Community Waivers:** \$1,867,429,000, an increase of \$245,600,000 over FY 20-21 revised available funding due to (\$23,478,000) supplemental appropriation
- **Intellectual Disabilities State Centers:** \$109,204,000, an increase of \$7,810,000 over FY 20-21

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- **Intellectual Disabilities Community Base Program:** \$144,716,000 an increase of \$284,000 over FY 20-21
- **Intellectual Disabilities Intermediate Care Facilities:** \$168,399,000, an increase of \$23,443,000 over FY 20-21 revised available funding due to \$9,895,000 supplemental appropriation
- **Autism Intervention and Services:** \$29,204,000, an increase of \$1,942,000 over FY 20-21 revised available funding due to \$814,000 supplemental funding
- **Mental Health Services:** \$833,145,000, an increase of \$8,448,000 over FY 20-21
- **Medical Assistance for Workers with Disabilities (MAWD):** \$64,307,000, an increase of \$19,088,000 over FY 20-21 revised available funding due to (\$15,299,000) supplemental appropriation
- **Medical Assistance Transportation (MATP):** \$62,340,000, an increase of \$4,275,000 over FY 20-21 revised available funding due to (\$60,693,000) supplemental appropriation
- **Medical Assistance Community Health-Choices (CHC):** \$4,232,177,000, an increase of \$1,066,627,000 over FY 20-21 revised available funding due to \$215,050,000 supplemental appropriation
- **Medical Assistance Long-Term Living (formerly named Long-Term Care and now includes the OBRA waiver and Act 150):** \$138,160,000, a decrease of \$70,681,000 from FY 20-21 revised available funding due to (\$24,301,000) supplemental appropriation
- **Long-Term Care Managed Care (LIFE program):** \$161,754,000, an increase of \$18,666,000 over FY 20-21 revised available funding due to (\$3,754,000) supplemental appropriation

Department of Labor & Industry

- **Transfer to Rehabilitation Fund:** \$47,942,000; level funded
- **Supported Employment:** \$397,000; level

funded

- **Centers for Independent Living:** \$1,950,000; level funded
- **Assistive Technology Financing:** \$500,000; an increase of \$25,000
- **Assistive Technology Demonstration & Training:** \$450,000; level funded

Programs that serve individuals with sensory disabilities in the Bureau of Blindness & Visual Services or Office for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing: level funded

Department of Education

Special Education: \$1,286,815,000, in increase of \$50,000,000 over FY 20-21

Pre-school Early Intervention: \$336,500,000, an increase of \$11,000,000 over FY 20-21

Chartered schools for children who are deaf and blind: \$57,722,000, an increase of \$165,000 over FY 20-21

Special Education - Approved Private Schools: \$122,656,000; level funded

Treasury

The ABLE program: \$900,000; level funded

Department of Drug and Alcohol Programs

Assistance to Drug and Alcohol Programs: \$44,732,000; level funded

General Government Operations: \$2,997,000, an increase of \$377,000 over FY 20-21

COVID-19 INFORMATION & RESOURCES

Department of Health

The Pennsylvania Department of Health continues to monitor the ongoing situation with Coronavirus (COVID-19) and rolling out the PA COVID-19 Vaccination plan in tandem with the work of the federal government and the Center for Disease Control (CDC). To get the most accurate and up-to-date information including PA vaccine distribution plan,

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recommendations, closures, and statistics, visit: [the Department of Health's website](#).

Pennsylvania Departments of Health and Human Services would like to share resources surrounding COVID-19 vaccine information for individuals that have limited or no internet access. The following services are available to learn more about the COVID-19 vaccine, including locating a healthcare provider, by phone:

- If an individual does not have a direct support professional (DSP) that can provide them with the appropriate COVID-19 vaccine and healthcare provider information, they can call the PA Health Hotline at 1-877-724-3258.
- Persevere PA is a COVID-19 crisis hotline designed to link callers with counselors to assist with the mental health impacts of COVID-19. They can also assist a caller in finding a healthcare provider to administer the vaccine when their corresponding phase arrives. Call Persevere PA at 1-855-284-2494.
- When arranging for an individual who is deaf or hard of hearing to receive information via telephone, PA Relay Services are available by dialing 711.

ODP Announces Updated COVID-19 Guidance for Infection Control and Mitigation for Home and Community Based Service Providers

The Office of Developmental Programs ODP has released updated guidance surrounding COVID-19 infection and mitigation control for Home and Community Based Services Providers. Read the [full announcement and Updated Guidance](#).

The ODP Vaccination Call Center Ceased Operations on June 30, 2021

Beginning on July 1, 2021, anyone wanting to be vaccinated can find a vaccine provider at <https://www.vaccines.gov/>.

If you need assistance finding a vaccine *provider* you can call 1-800-232-0233. You will need to schedule an appointment to be vaccinated with the selected provider. If you have questions about

the vaccination process, call the Pennsylvania Department of Health hotline at 1-877-724-3258. If you are unable to leave your home and wish to be vaccinated, please contact your HealthChoices [Managed Care Organization](#) (MCO) or local [Area Agency on Aging](#) (AAA) to coordinate your access to vaccine.

Individuals may also contact the ODP Customer Service Line, Monday - Friday, 8:30 a.m.-4 p.m., at 1-888-565-9435 (TTY number: 1-866-388-1114) if they are unable to secure a vaccination through these other means.

Disability Rights Pennsylvania Vaccine Hotline Center

Disability Rights Pennsylvania is operating a Vaccine Hotline to assist Pennsylvanians with disabilities who are interested in getting the COVID-19 vaccine Monday – Friday 7 a.m. – 7 p.m. at 1 (833) DRP-2-VAX or vaccine@disabilityrightspa.org.

Resources

- [Jefferson Health Study – Individuals with ID at Great Risk from COVID-19](#) - an analysis from a national study confirming that those with intellectual disabilities (ID) are at greatest risk of death from COVID-19 after those of older age/elderly.
- [Vaccinations: Unpaid Caregivers Attestation Information](#) - a letter to verify eligibility for the vaccination.
- Article: [Examining How Crisis Standards of Care May Lead to Intersectional Medical Discrimination Against COVID-19 Patients](#)
- Article: [New COVID-19 Response Legislation Finally Recognizes Urgent Needs of People with Disabilities](#)
- Article: [ADA Concerns Raised Over COVID-19 Vaccine Rollout - Disability Scoop](#)
- [PA COVID-19 Resources](#)
- [Multilingual Resources from PA Departments](#).
- [Mental Health Information and Support](#)
- [Plain Language Guides/Videos on the](#)

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COVID-19 Pandemic

- [Disability Rights Pennsylvania – COVID-19 Vaccination FAQ](#)

REGIONAL ACCOUNTABLE HEALTH COUNCILS FOCUS ON PROMOTING HEALTH EQUITY AND REDUCING DISPARITIES ACROSS PENNSYLVANIA

The Department of Human Services (DHS) announced the establishment of five Regional Accountable Health Councils (RAHCs), which will lead efforts to address social determinants of health, reduce health disparities, and promote equity and value in health care. The RAHCs will provide opportunities for strategic health planning across the health care system and better collaboration between health care providers and social service organizations with the goal to develop strategies and partnerships addressing health needs and disparities in their communities. Five RAHCs were established to reach Southeast, Northeast, Northwest, Southwest, and the Lehigh/Capitol regions of Pennsylvania. Learn more about [Health Innovations and promoting health equity in PA.](#)

ENTERPRISE CASE MANAGEMENT SYSTEM UPDATE

The Pennsylvania Department of Human Services (DHS) is in the early stages of implementing an Enterprise Case Management (ECM) system to support the administration and management of various DHS-supervised programs. When implemented, ECM will support a statewide child welfare case management system; enrollment and case management for Home and Community-Based Services (HCBS); intake and management for hearings and appeals; application, enrollment, and support services for programs administered by OLTL. (Office of Long Term Living). ECM will replace several legacy systems across program offices through the implementation of one common solution, including Home & Community Services Information System (HCSIS) which is used by the Office of Developmental Programs. [ECM At a Glance](#)

EMERGENCY RENTAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM AVAILABLE NOW

The Emergency Rental Assistance Program (ERAP) is available for renters of residential properties who are at risk of eviction or utility shutoffs due to hardship caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. Landlords can apply for assistance on behalf of tenants and receive rental assistance directly if the tenant is eligible. If you are in need of assistance, don't wait. Apply today. Pennsylvanians can submit applications for ERAP online at www.compass.state.pa.us. More information about ERAP can be found at www.dhs.pa.gov/erap.

BILLS OF INTEREST

Below we summarize some bills of interest to the disability community from the 2021-2022 Session. For more information about these bills or any other state legislative activity, go to <https://www.legis.state.pa.us/>.

HB 25. Introduced by Representative Michael J. Puskaric (R-Allegheny). This bill would repeal the mail-in voting provisions contained in Act 77 of 2019. Abolishing the No Excuse **Mail in Vote**. Referred to State Government, Jan. 11, 2021.

Impact: Would remove the ability for individuals with disabilities to enroll in mail-in voting. This would not remove the ability to apply for an absentee ballot.

HB 44. Introduced by Representative Seth M. Grove (R-York). This bill would further provide for establishment of value-based models relating to the **Managed Care Organization Outcomes Program** and for managed care organization Medicaid contracts. Referred to Health, Jan. 11, 2021.

Impact: Would provide incentives for hospitals and MCO's to improve healthcare outcomes under Medicaid and establishes cost reduction targets for the Department of Human Services.

HB 45. Introduced by Representative Francis X. Ryan (R-Lebanon). This bill would **merge eight existing state agencies into four new state agencies**. These new agencies would be the Commonwealth Office of Management and Budget (OMB), the Department of Business, Tourism and Workforce Development (DBTWD), the

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Department of Local Government and Community Affairs (DLGCA) and the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS). Each merger in the legislation will require the adoption of a strategic plan detailing how the agencies described in the legislation are to be combined. To provide adequate time to prepare for the mergers, the legislation gives seven months following the effective date to develop the strategic plan. Referred to State Government, Jan. 11, 2021.

Impact: Would merge the Department of Labor & Industry with functions from the Department of Community & Economic Development and the Department of State. It ensures economic development programs are under one department.

HB 47. Introduced by Representative Matthew D. Dowling (R-Fayette). This bill would **merge eight existing state agencies into four new state agencies**. These new agencies would be the Commonwealth Office of Management and Budget (OMB), the Department of Business, Tourism and Workforce Development (DBTWD), the Department of Local Government and Community Affairs (DLGCA) and the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS). Each merger in the legislation will require the adoption of a strategic plan detailing how the agencies described in the legislation are to be combined. To provide adequate time to prepare for the mergers, the legislation gives seven months following the effective date to develop the strategic plan. Referred to State Government, Jan. 11, 2021. Reported as amended, Jan. 27, 2021. First consideration, Jan. 27, 2021. Laid on the table, Jan. 27, 2021.

Impact: Create the Department of Local Government and Community Affairs (DLGCA) to address local community needs and concerns.

HB 49. Introduced by Representative Paul Schemel (R-Franklin). This bill would **merge eight existing state agencies into four new state agencies**. These new agencies would be the Commonwealth Office of Management and Budget (OMB), the Department of Business, Tourism and Workforce Development (DBTWD), the Department of Local Government and Community Affairs (DLGCA) and the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS). Each merger in the legislation will require the adoption of a strategic plan detailing how the

agencies described in the legislation are to be combined. To provide adequate time to prepare for the mergers, the legislation gives seven months following the effective date to develop the strategic plan. Referred to State Government, Jan. 11, 2021.

Impact: Would merge the Department of Health and the Department of Human Services into one agency.

HB 50. Introduced by Representative Seth M. Grove (R-York). This bill would introduce a proposed constitutional amendment to require any **supplemental spending** to be approved in a standalone bill by the General Assembly. Referred to Appropriations, Jan. 11, 2021.

Impact: Would set forth a constitutional amendment process to require any supplemental spending to be approved in a standalone bill by the General Assembly.

HB 51. Introduced by Representative Timothy J. O'Neal (R-Washington). This bill is part of a **Financial Reform Package**. Referred to State Government, Jan. 11, 2021.

Impact: Would require any surplus funds to be deposited into the state's Rainy-Day Fund. Deposits into the Rainy-Day Fund would continue until the state has saved an equivalent to 20% of the commonwealth's total revenue collections.

HB 52. Introduced by Representative Andrew Lewis (R-Dauphin). This bill is part of a **Financial Reform Package**. Referred to State Government, Jan. 11, 2021.

Impact: Would establish a State Council on Finances which would consist of 12 members. These members would be the following individuals: Secretary of Revenue; Budget Secretary; The Auditor General; State Treasurer; Director of the Independent Fiscal office; The Minority Chairperson of the Senate Appropriation Committee; The Majority Chairperson of the Senate Appropriation Committee; The Minority Chairperson of the House Appropriation Committee; The Majority Chairperson of the Senate Appropriation Committee; An individual with a background in private or public finance appointed by the governor; An individual with a background in private or public finance appointed by the President Pro-Tempore of the Senate; An individual with a background in private or public finance appointed by the Speaker of the House.

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HB 53. Introduced by Representative Dawn W. Keefer (R-York). This bill is part of a **Financial Reform Package**. Referred to Appropriations, Jan. 11, 2021.

Impact: Would amend the Commonwealth's Constitution to prevent the creation or use of special funds except for the following reasons: Motor License Fund; Unemployment Compensation Fund; Workers Compensation Fund; State Pension system; ABLE Accounts; TAP Accounts; Any fund paid into by a specific industry for a specific industry.

HB 71. Introduced by Representative Ryan Warner (R-Fayette). This bill would establish **spending limits** that the Commonwealth must abide by each fiscal year. The proposed constitutional amendment would limit the amount the Commonwealth's spending may increase, based on a three-year average of the Commonwealth's inflation and population growth. Referred to State Government, Jan. 11, 2021. Laid on the table, Jan. 13, 2021.

Impact: Would amend the Pennsylvania Constitution to establish spending limits that the Commonwealth must abide by each fiscal year.

HB 85. Introduced by Representative Dan L. Miller (D-Allegheny). This bill would provide for **students with disabilities** at institutions of higher education. Referred to Education, Jan. 11, 2021.

Impact: Would improve the transition to post-secondary schools for students with disabilities by incorporating parts of Senator Bob Casey's federal RISE (Respond, Innovate, Succeed and Empower) Act.

HB 87. Introduced by Representative Dan L. Miller (D-Allegheny). This bill would provide for legislative findings and declarations, for definitions, for **Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC)**, for powers and duties, for State plan, for grants and funding and for compliance with standards; repealing provisions relating to assurances of centers for independent living; further providing for allocation of funds by designated State agencies; and making an appropriation. Referred to Human Services, Jan. 11, 2021.

Impact: Would institute updates and changes to Act 139 of 1994 that will modernize its language to be in lockstep with the Federal Workforce Investment Opportunity Act (WIOA). These changes include

updated guidance on Pennsylvania Statewide Independent Living Council (PA SILC) board composition, the role of the DSE with PA SILC and CILs, addition of the 5th core services for CILS of transition (youth, institutional settings), federally funded CILs already are required to do this service per WIOA) and a new base level for funding of (\$350,000).

HB 89. Introduced by Representative Dan L. Miller (D-Allegheny). This bill would require pharmacies to make **accessible prescription drug container labels** available to individuals who are deafblind and visually-impaired when requested. These labels will be available, at no cost to the consumer, in audio, braille, and large font formats. This measure is modeled off of the best practices released by the United States Access Board in 2013, and will enable individuals with visual impairments to manage their medications securely, independently, and privately. Referred to Health, Jan. 11, 2021.

Impact: Would require pharmacies to make accessible prescription drug container labels available to individuals who are deafblind and visually-impaired when requested. These labels will be available, at no cost to the consumer, in audio, braille, and large font formats.

HB 92. Introduced by Representative Dan L. Miller (D-Allegheny). This bill would provide for **intellectual disability and autism** fee schedule rates. Referred to Human Services, Jan. 11, 2021.

Impact: Would amend the Human Services Code requiring that rates for Direct Support Professionals annually be set based on a national market consumer index.

HB 94. Introduced by Representative Dan L. Miller (D-Allegheny). This bill would provide for definitions and for **medical excuses from attending school**. Referred to Education, Jan. 11, 2021.

Impact: Would allow for valid medical excuses submitted in a timely manner to not be considered an unexcused absence and lead to medical truancy.

HB 102. Introduced by Representative Dan L. Miller (D-Allegheny). This bill would provide access to trained, professional **support services** in every school district across the Commonwealth. Referred to Education, Jan. 11, 2021.

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Impact: Would require school districts to evaluate their needs based on school population and requires a necessary complement of school counselors, psychologists, social workers, and nurses to ensure that access to help is not a problem and that case load management is not an issue.

HB 108. Introduced by Representative Valerie S. Gaydos (R-Allegheny). This bill would reform state government operations including **Medicaid**. This package will codify the grand jury recommendations along with enacting statutes which mirror federal law to allow the commonwealth to combat fraud in Medicaid and the rest of state government while recouping state tax dollars. Referred to State Government, Jan. 11, 2021.

Third consideration and final passage, Jan. 27, 2021. Referred to State Government, Jan. 28, 2021 [Senate].

Impact: Would require agencies to review their programs and expenditures and assess whether they are highly, moderately or unlikely to be susceptible to an improper payment.

HB 109. Introduced by Representative Clint Owlett (R-Tioga). This bill would reform state government operations including **Medicaid**. This package will codify the grand jury recommendations along with enacting statutes which mirror federal law to allow the commonwealth to combat fraud in Medicaid and the rest of state government while recouping state tax dollars. Referred to Human Services, Jan. 11, 2021.

Impact: Would increase the penalties for making a false claim against the commonwealth's Medicaid Program under Section 1407 of the Human Services Code. Under this bill the penalty for knowing or causing a fraudulent claim to be submitted would commit a felony of the second degree if the fraudulent claim is \$100,000 or more. If the claim is between \$2,000 and \$100,000 the penalty for the fraudulent claim would be a third-degree felony. If the claim is \$2,000 or less the penalty would be a third-degree misdemeanor.

HB 114. Introduced by Representative Dan L. Miller (D-Allegheny). This bill would adopt a **streamlined hiring and promotion process** for qualified individuals with significant disabilities whose physical

or mental impairments impact their ability to participate in the competitive hiring and promotion process. Referred to Labor and Industry, Jan. 11, 2021.

Impact: Would amend Part III of Title 71 of the Pennsylvania Code (Civil Service Reform), an appointing authority may noncompetitively appoint an individual with a significant disability to a temporary position when it is necessary to observe an applicant on the job to establish that the applicant is able or ready to perform the duties of the position (trial work period).

HB 217. Introduced by Representative Stanley Saylor (R-York). This bill would provide for **additional appropriations** from the General Fund for the expenses of the Executive Department for the fiscal year July 1, 2021, to June 30, 2022. Referred to Appropriations, Jan. 22, 2021. Re-committed to Appropriations, Jan. 27, 2021.

Impact: Would appropriate General Funds for the fiscal year July 1, 2021 – June 30, 2022.

HB 218. Introduced by Representative Stanley Saylor (R-York). This bill would provide for **additional appropriations** from the General Fund for the expenses of the Executive Department for the fiscal year July 1, 2020, to June 30, 2021. Referred to Appropriations, Jan. 22, 2021.

Impact: Would appropriate General Funds for the fiscal year July 1, 2021 – June 30, 2022.

HB 250. Introduced by Representative Dan L. Miller (D-Allegheny). This bill would amend the **Public School Code** to add curriculum requirements for Health classes across Pennsylvania to educate students in an age-appropriate manner about mental health, physical disabilities, and developmental disabilities. Referred to Education, Jan. 25, 2021.

Impact: Would require the Department of Education to create curriculum for Health classes that will educate students in an age-appropriate manner about mental health, physical disabilities, and developmental disabilities.

HB 404. Introduced by Representative John T. Galloway (D-Bucks). This bill would provide for Statewide **children's mental health ombudsman**. Referred to Human Services, Feb. 4, 2021.

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Impact: This legislation would designate an official be tasked with the following responsibilities: will have the authority to advocate on behalf of children with mental disorders; identify barriers to effective mental health treatment; monitor compliance with laws pertaining to children's behavioral health services; and investigate and attempt to resolve complaints regarding violations by an entity regulated by the State which have an adverse effect upon children.

HB 407. Introduced by Representative John T. Galloway (D-Bucks). This bill would establish the **School Student Mental Health Assistance** Augmentation Account and provide grants to support school-linked mental health services. Referred to Education, Feb. 4, 2021.

Impact: This legislation would provide for grants to be established to support school-aligned mental health services. These grants can be used by school entities to identify and diagnose mental health conditions among students, fund transportation for children receiving school-linked mental health services when school is out of session, and cover costs associated with delivering telemedicine to school children.

HB 409. Introduced by Representative John T. Galloway (D-Bucks). This bill would establish a mental health care services clearinghouse. This clearinghouse will serve as a publicly accessible registry of **mental health care resources** available across the Commonwealth and will accordingly assist school personnel in connecting families to community mental health resources. Referred to Human Services, Feb. 4, 2021. Final passage, June 14, 2021. Referred to Senate Health and Human Services June 14, 2021.

Impact: Streamlines and makes a publicly accessible site for information on mental health care services that are available in Pennsylvania. This clearinghouse would increase coordination efforts among schools, communities, and mental health providers.

HB 411. Introduced by Representative Dan L. Miller (D-Allegheny). This bill would require state-owned buildings and certain places of public accommodation, including auditoriums, convention centers, sports arenas, and amusement parks with

a maximum occupancy of 2,000 or more people, to install and maintain at least one **adult changing station**. Referred to Labor and Industry Committee, Feb. 4, 2021.

Impact: Would require state-owned buildings and certain places of public accommodation, including auditoriums, convention centers, sports arenas and amusement parks with a maximum occupancy of 2,000 or more people, to install and maintain at least one adult changing station.

HB 464. Introduced by Representative Karen Boback (R-Columbia). This bill would provide for a primary **caregiver support** program and caregivers of individuals with disabilities. Referred to House Aging and Older Adult Services, Feb. 9, 2021. Final passage, April 6, 2021. Referred to Senate Aging and Youth, April 9, 2021. Final passage, June 8, 2021. Approved by the Governor, June 11, 2021 becoming **Act No. 20**.

Impact: Expands the Family Caregiver Support Program to include caregivers for individuals with disabilities to be eligible for respite and caregiving related service supplies.

HB 493. Introduced by Representative Liz Hanbidge (D-Montgomery). This bill would require health insurance policies to provide coverage for **hearing aids** and a resolution that would urge Congress to expand Medicare coverage to include hearing aids. Referred to Insurance, Feb. 10, 2021.

Impact: Would require health insurance policies to provide coverage for hearing aids and a resolution that would urge Congress to expand Medicare coverage to include hearing aids.

HB 540. Introduced by Representative Karen Boback (R-Columbia). This bill would provide for youth suicide awareness and prevention and providing for violence prevention and **social inclusion**. Referred to Education, Feb. 16, 2021.

Impact: Would require schools to implement at least one hour or a standard class period per year of suicide prevention & training, violence prevention training and social inclusion training to students in grades six through twelve.

HB 543. Introduced by Representative Karen Boback (R-Columbia). This bill would amend the

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Unemployment Compensation (UC) Law to allow for **reasonable accommodations** to be made for individuals with a disability who are required to take the reemployment class. Referred to Labor and Industry, Feb. 16, 2021.

Impact: Would amend the Unemployment Compensation (UC) Law to allow for reasonable accommodations to be made for individuals with a disability who are required to take the reemployment class.

HB 547. Introduced by Representative Dan L. Miller (D-Allegheny). This bill would create the Department of Accessibility & Inclusion. Referred to State Government, March 2, 2021.

Impact: Would consolidate several existing programs under a new Department of Accessibility and Inclusion and create a secretary position to serve on the governor's cabinet.

HB 611. Introduced by Representative Austin A. Davis (D-Allegheny). This bill would establish the **Direct Care Worker Wage Advisory Board** and provides for its powers and duties; providing for minimum wage for direct care workers and for a direct care worker registry; and imposing penalties. Referred to Labor and Industry, Feb. 24, 2021.

Impact: Would direct the state's Secretary of Human Services to create a Direct Care Worker Wage Board. This board would meet to set a minimum wage for direct care workers, examine ways to grow this field, hear complaints from workers, and create a registry of direct care workers in the state.

HB 621. Introduced by Representative Brandon Markosek (D-Allegheny). This bill would provide special **absentee ballots printed in Braille** to qualified voters who submit a written request for a special ballot. Referred to State Government, Feb. 24, 2021.

Impact: Would require the Department of State to provide special absentee ballots printed in braille to qualified voters who submit a written request for a special ballot.

HB 640. Introduced by Representative Daniel Miller (D-Allegheny) and Representative Patty Kim (D-Dauphin). This bill would allow students who were enrolled in school with an active IEP when

the COVID-19 state of emergency was declared by Governor to continue to be eligible services under Section 1301 of the School Code until twelve months after the expiration of the emergency declaration. Referred to Education Committee, March 11, 2021.

Impact: Would allow parents to decide if their child who is aging out of special education services participates in an additional year to address the loss of supports and transition services during COVID-19.

HB 649. Introduced by Representative Kathy L. Rapp (R-Warren). This bill would provide for access to long-term care facilities for **essential caregivers**, for additional safety requirements for residents of long-term care facilities, for suspension of access for essential caregivers and for personal protective equipment for essential caregivers. Referred to House Aging and Older Adult Services, Feb. 24, 2021. Final passage, March 24, 2021. Referred to Senate Aging and Youth, March 25, 2021. Final passage, June 16, 2021. Approved by Governor, July 1, 2021. **Act.No.67.**

Impact: Would allow a designated essential caregiver to be named for each resident of a long-term care facility.

HB 694. Introduced by Representative Carol Hill-Evans (R-York). This bill would address the overall needs, including **mental health**, of students to prevent school dropouts. Referred to Education, Feb. 26, 2021.

Impact: Would assist public schools in procuring the services of non-profit organizations that provide evidence-based student support services to help students remove barriers to learning. Specifically, it will create a program that would allocate grants to schools to be used solely for services addressing the overall needs, including mental health, of students to prevent school dropouts.

HB 784. Introduced by Representative Tim Briggs (D-Montgomery). This bill would requires the addition of **mental health education** into existing health and wellness curricula for all primary and secondary schools under the jurisdiction of the Department of Education. Mental health education will be taught in order to establish parity between physical and mental health. Referred to Education, March 8, 2021.

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Impact: Would require the addition of mental health education into existing health and wellness curricula for all primary and secondary schools under the jurisdiction of the Department of Education.

HB 806. Introduced by Representative Joe Ciresi (D-Montgomery). This bill would create an **Education Reform** Commission. The commission will conduct a comprehensive study and make concrete recommendations on various educational topics including equal access to education for all students. Referred to Education, March 8, 2021.

Impact: Would create an Education Reform Commission tasked with performing an in-depth study of the current educational needs in Pennsylvania, projecting out those needs over the next 25 years, and determining what can and should be done to help reform the current education system and prepare Pennsylvania for the future.

HB 816. Introduced by Representative P. Michael Sturla (D-Lancaster). This bill would include **trauma** as a factor in the school funding formula and removing significant barriers to learning. Referred to Education, March 8, 2021.

Impact: Would include chronic absenteeism, homelessness, and students living in foster care, definitive proxies of trauma that school districts are already mandated to measure, in the school funding formula based on the recommendations of the 2015 Basic Education Funding Commission Report.

HB 841. Introduced by Representative Anthony M. DeLuca (D-Allegheny). This bill would further provide **rights** and remedies of persons in mental health treatment. Referred to Human Services, March 9, 2021.

Impact: Would codify that mental health patients have the right to be free from abuse, neglect, and exploitation.

HB 893. Introduced by Representative Liz Hanbidge (D-Montgomery). This bill would allow an election official to bring a paper ballot – or portable **voting** machine when available – to any voter outside the physical polling place who has a physical, emotional, intellectual, developmental disability or short-term inability that would preclude them from easily accessing voting machines. Referred to State Government, March 15, 2021.

Impact: Would allow an election official to bring a paper ballot – or portable voting machine when available – to any voter outside the physical polling place who has a physical, emotional, intellectual, developmental disability, or short-term inability that would preclude them from easily accessing a voting machine.

HB 909. Introduced by Representative Melissa Shusterman (D-Chester) and Representative Jessica Benham (D-Allegheny). This bill would allow parents of students with IEPs to repeat a school year or students who are aging out of services to opt-in for an additional year due to loss of learning during COVID-19. Referred to Education Committee, March 15, 2021.

Impact: Would allow parents to decide if their child with an IEP repeats the school year to address the loss of educational supports and services during COVID-19.

HB 1012. Introduced by Representative Timothy J. O’Neal (R-Washington). This bill intends to preserve access to **ventilator care** in Pennsylvania by dedicating additional Medicaid funding to those facilities already demonstrating a significant commitment to caring for these Pennsylvanians. Referred to House Human Services March 25, 2021. Final passage, June 8, 2021. Referred to Senate Human Services June 9, 2021. Companion Bill **SB 959**, introduced by Senator Camera Bartolotta (R-Beaver).

Impact: Provides increased Medicaid funding to facilities that offer ventilator care in the Commonwealth to address an access to care crisis and incentives for facilities to expand geographic access. This will expand the ability for these care facilities to assist more individuals throughout the state.

HB 1016. Introduced by Representative Anthony M. DeLuca (D-Allegheny). This bill would provide for departmental powers and duties as to small **personal care homes**. Referred to Health, March 29, 2021.

Impact: Would extend two provisions of current regulations to small personal care homes to provide the Department of Human Services to inspect such facilities at least once annually unannounced, and those responsible for the small personal care home will be required to submit to a criminal background check. All

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small personal care homes will be registered.

HB 1115. Introduced by Representative Kate A. Klunk (R-York). This bill would provide for definitions and for medical assistance benefits for **workers with disabilities** and workers with medically improved disabilities. Referred to Health, April 7, 2021. Companion bill **SB 156**.

Impact: Would create a new category under MAWD that would allow for a higher earning level for an individual with disabilities who has participated in the MAWD program for the previous 12 consecutive months. Under this new category, individuals would contribute a larger percentage towards their medical assistance benefits and still be able to retain access to their benefits.

HB 1313. Introduced by Representative Michael J. Driscoll (D-Philadelphia). This bill would require wheelchairs and other **electrical mobility devices** to have red reflectors that will make them more visible to drivers. Referred to Transportation, April 30, 2021.

Impact: Would require wheelchairs and other electrical mobility devices to have red reflectors that will make them more visible to drivers in order to minimize tragic accidents.

HB 1329. Introduced by Representative Jason Ortity (R-Allegheny). This bill would require employers receiving tax credits, outside of educational tax credits, to implement a **hiring program** for individuals with disabilities. Referred to Finance, May 5, 2021.

Impact: Would require employers receiving tax credits, outside of educational tax credits, to implement a hiring program for individuals with disabilities.

HB 1429. Introduced by Representative Lynda Schlegel Culver (R-Northumberland). This bill would provide for the offense of financial exploitation of an older adult or **care-dependent person**. Referred to House Aging and Older Adult Services, May 17, 2021. Final passage, June 15, 2021. Referred to Senate Judiciary, June 17, 2021. Presented to the Governor, June 28, 2021.

Impact: Would give the Attorney General's office concurrent jurisdiction to investigate individuals

who use their position of trust to financially exploit older adults and care-dependent people.

HB 1431. Introduced by Representative Kate A. Klunk (R-York). This bill would provide for the offense of **abuse of care-dependent person**. Referred to House Aging and Older Adult Services, May 17, 2021. Final passage, June 15, 2021. Referred to Senate Judiciary, June 17, 2021. Presented to the Governor, June 28, 2021.

Impact: Would establish abuse of social media by employees who post pictures of care dependent individuals without permission and categorize the crime as a misdemeanor

HB 1566. Introduced by Representative Dan L. Miller (D-Allegheny). This bill would make an appropriation from the General Fund to the Department of Labor and Industry, Office for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing, for the purpose of a Statewide program to facilitate communication for individuals who are **deafblind** for the fiscal year beginning July 1, 2021. Referred to Appropriations, June 25, 2021.

Impact: Would appropriate money from the General Fund during the 2021-2022 fiscal year for Office for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing, a statewide program to facilitate communication for individuals who are deafblind.

SB 40. Introduced by Senator Kristin Phillips-Hill (R-York). This bill would integrate **behavioral health and physical health services** in Pennsylvania's Medicaid program, **HealthChoices**. Referred to Health and Human Services, Jan. 20, 2021.

Impact: Would coordinate mental health, substance abuse and primary care services in an effort to produce the best outcomes and best care for people with complex health needs.

SB 44. Introduced by Senator Katie J. Muth (D-Berks). This bill would provide emergency relief to those who previously received support through **General Assistance**. Referred to Health and Human Services, March 15, 2021.

Impact: Would establish the Emergency Relief Program, which is temporary emergency assistance for the most vulnerable populations with immediate

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and urgent needs. Specifically, Emergency Relief goes to people with disabilities who cannot work, people in treatment for a substance use disorder, orphaned children cared for by neighbors or friends, people fleeing domestic violence, qualified veterans or people caring for someone with a disability.

SB 94. Introduced by Senator Mario M. Scavello (R-Monroe). This bill would provide for a **loan forgiveness** program for qualified college graduates entering the mental health, intellectual disability and drug and alcohol treatment professions. Referred to Education, Jan. 22, 2021.

Impact: Would provide for a loan forgiveness program for qualified college graduates entering the mental health, intellectual disability and drug and alcohol treatment professions.

SB 108. Introduced by Senator Camera Bartolotta (R-Beaver). This bill would intend to preserve access to **ventilator care** in Pennsylvania by dedicating additional Medicaid funding to those facilities already demonstrating a significant commitment to caring for these Pennsylvanians. Referred to Health and Human Services, Jan. 22, 2021. Final passage, April 28, 2021. Referred to House Health and Human Services, April 29, 2021. Final passage, June 25, 2021. Presented to the Governor, June 26, 2021. Companion Bill **HB 1012**, introduced by Representative Timothy J. O'Neal (R-Washington).

Impact: Provides increased Medicaid funding to facilities that offer ventilator care in the Commonwealth to address an access to care crisis and incentives for facilities to expand geographic access. This will expand the ability for these care facilities to assist more individuals throughout the state.

SB 156. Introduced by Senator Bob Mensch (R-Berks). This bill would allow individuals with disabilities to increase earnings under a new category of MAWD, called **Workers with Job Success (WJS)**. Referred to Health and Human Services, Feb. 2, 2021. Final passage, May 11, 2021. Referred to House Health May 17, 2021. Final passage, June 25, 2021. Signed by the Governor, July 1, 2021, **Act No. 69**.

Impact: Would create a new category under MAWD that would allow for a higher earning level for an

individual with disabilities who has participated in the MAWD program for the previous 12 consecutive months. Under this new category, individuals would contribute a larger percentage towards their medical assistance benefits and still be able to retain access to their benefits.

SB 195. Introduced by Senator Judy Ward (R-Blair). This bill would revise the **Caregiver Support Program (CSP)** to enhance the services provided to families and caregivers. Referred to Aging and Youth, Feb. 10, 2021.

Impact: Would update the PA Family Caregiver Support Act in the following ways: removes the statutory Caregiver Support Program (CSP) monthly care plan cost cap, allowing it to be set by the department; removes the \$300 monthly aggregate average reimbursement limit for all CSP cases; removes the CSP home modification lifetime limit, allowing it to be set by the department; and updates terminology and definitions to include caregivers of individuals with disabilities.

SB 255. Introduced by Senator Patrick Browne (R-Lehigh). Budget bill for fiscal year July 1, 2021, to June 30, 2022. Referred to Appropriations, Feb. 22, 2021. Presented to the Governor, June 28, 2021. Approved by the Governor, June 30, 2021 becoming **Act No. 1A**.

Impact: Establishes the appropriation of funding from the General Fund for the 2021-2022 State Budget.

SB 367. Introduced by Christine M. Tartaglione (D-Philadelphia). This bill would create the **Office for People with Disabilities** within and to be administered by the Office of the Governor and make the office permanent by statute. Referred to State Government, March 12, 2021.

Impact: Would permanently establish the Office for People with Disabilities within and to be administered by the Office of the Governor.

SB 404. Introduced by Senator Lisa M. Boscola (D-Lehigh). This bill would provide for **voter's bill of rights**. Referred to State Government, March 11, 2021.

Impact: Would create a Statement of Voter's Rights and require that the State of Voter's Rights be visible in all voter registration offices and polling places.

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SB 427. Introduced by Senator John R. Gordner (R-Columbia). This bill would amend the **Pennsylvania Affordable Housing Act** to reestablish an exemption to state prevailing wage rates for certain federally funded housing grants. Referred to Urban Affairs and Housing, March 15, 2021.

Impact: Would amend the Pennsylvania Affordable Housing Act to reestablish an exemption to state prevailing wage rates for certain federally funded housing grants.

SB 474. Introduced by Senator Michele Brooks (R-Crawford). This bill would allow constituents to obtain a **disability placard** in their respective legislative district offices rather than waiting to receive them in the mail. Referred to Transportation, March 23, 2021.

Impact: Would allow individuals to obtain handicap parking placards in their respective legislative district offices rather than receiving them in the mail from PennDOT.

SB 664. Introduced by Senator Jake Corman (R-Centre). This bill would all students aging out of the special education system during the 2020-2021 school year to receive an **additional year** and allows any K-12 student the ability to **repeat their grade level** in the 2021-2022 school year due to the impact of COVID-19. Referred to Senate Education, May 7, 2021. Final Passage, May 12, 2021. Referred to House Education, May 17, 2021. Final Passage with amendments, June 23, 2021. Senate Concurrence Vote, June 24, 2021. Signed by Governor Wolf, June 30, 2021, becoming **Act No. 66**.

Impact: Would allow a students aging out of the special education system during the 2020-2021 school year the ability to attend the 2021-2022 school year to address loss of transition services during COVID-19. Also, will enable parents to elect to have their K-12 child repeat their grade level in the 2021-2022 school year.

SB 704. Introduced by Senator Lisa Baker (R-Lackawanna). This bill expands the crime of institutional **sexual assault**. Referred to Senate Judiciary, May 21, 2021. Second Consideration, June 25, 2021.

Impact: Would expand the crime of institutional sexual assault to include those who provide care

to care-dependents individuals. Specifically, it would close the loophole for caregivers to use the defense of “consent” when they sexually assault an individual who is care-dependent and they are providing services to.

Resolutions

HR 47. Introduced by Representative Melissa L. Shusterman (D-Chester). This resolution would increase the fee paid to **guardians** from \$100 to \$300. Referred to Judiciary, Feb. 9, 2021.

HR 49. Introduced by Representative Francis X. Ryan (R-Lebanon). This resolution urges Congress of the United States to fund the costs associated with **special education**. Referred to Education, Feb. 10, 2021.

HR 50. Introduced by Representative Liz Hanbidge (D-Montgomery). This resolution urges Congress to expand Medicare coverage to include **hearing aids**. Referred to Insurance, Feb. 10, 2021.

HR 54. Introduced by Representative Brian Sims (D-Philadelphia). This resolution recognizes **discrimination** against women, people of color, LGBTQ+ people, people with disabilities and other marginalized groups as a public health issue threatening the safety of Pennsylvanians. Referred to Health, Feb. 17, 2021.

SR 39. Introduced by Senator Scott Martin (R-Lancaster). This resolution designates March 21, 2021 as “World Down Syndrome Day” in Pennsylvania. Referred to Rules & Executive Nominations Committee, March 11, 2021.

HR 72. Introduced by Representative P. Michael Sturla (D-Lancaster). This resolution would conduct a comprehensive study to find an age-appropriate measuring tool that our 500 school districts can use to measure, track, and combat **trauma** with the necessary support services. Referred to Education, March 8, 2021.

SR 140. Introduced by Christine M. Tartaglione (D-Philadelphia). This Resolution designates June 21 through June 30, 2021, as **Disability Pride Week** in Pennsylvania. This week is designed to change the way people think about and define “disability.” Referred to Rules and Executive Nominations, June 24, 2021.

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NATIONAL NEWS

MEMBERS OF CONGRESS UNVEIL BILL TO MAKE HCBS AVAILABLE TO ALL, ELIMINATE INSTITUTIONAL BIAS

Senators Maggie Hassan (D-NH), Bob Casey (D-PA), and Sherrod Brown (D-OH); and Representative Debbie Dingell (D-MI) released draft text of a bill to make Home and Community-Based Services (HCBS) a mandatory benefit under Medicaid and eliminate waiting lists. Currently, states are allowed to limit HCBS services through waiting lists, while they cannot do so for institutional placements. This bill eliminates that institutional bias. Additionally, it increases federal funding to provide for higher pay for direct support professionals

CHANGES MADE TO MONEY FOLLOWS THE PERSON

Money Follows the Person (MFP) was recently extended for three years by the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2021. Since it was first authorized in 2005, the *Money Follows the Person* (MFP) program has helped states expand community living opportunities for people with disabilities and older adults. More information [HERE](#). The Consolidated Appropriations Act (CAA) of 2021 extended funding for the MFP program through 2023. It also made two changes to expand participant eligibility that are expected to increase the number of transitions into the community:

- First, the CAA of 2021 reduced the minimum length of time in an inpatient facility before an individual can qualify for MFP from 90 days to 60 days;
- Second, the days a person receives skilled nursing services or skilled rehabilitative services in a certified skilled nursing facility now can be counted toward the length-of-stay requirement.

FCC EMERGENCY BROADBAND BENEFIT PROGRAM NOW OPEN

The Emergency Broadband Benefit is a Federal Communications Commission (FCC) program to help families and households struggling to afford internet service during the COVID-19 pandemic. The Emergency Broadband Benefit provides a discount of up to \$50 per month towards broadband service for eligible households. Eligible households can also receive a one-time discount of up to \$100 to purchase a laptop, desktop computer, or tablet from participating providers. Read more at [Emergency Broadband Benefit](#).

CMS ANNOUNCES SPECIAL ENROLLMENT PERIOD FOR HEALTH COVERAGE

The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) has *announced* it will open a special enrollment period (SEP) for federal marketplace health coverage. Typically, individuals can only enroll in marketplace health coverage or change plans toward the end of the year or after a major life event. As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, CMS opened a SEP from February 15 - August 15 for individuals in states that use the federally facilitated marketplace ([healthcare.gov](https://www.healthcare.gov)). Additionally, several states with states-based marketplaces have also **announced** special enrollment periods.

RESOURCES

Disability Rights Pennsylvania Announces the Release of its 2020 Voting Access Report

Disability Rights Pennsylvania's report details barriers to voting through the mail and voting in person for individuals with disabilities. Read the full [DRP's 2020 Voting Access Report](#).

Special Education: The 50-Year Fight for the Right to Learn – Watch this clip to learn more about the fight for children with disabilities to learn with their non-disabled peers here: [Video](#).

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The Arc of Pennsylvania E-Learning Modules Series

The E-Learning Series provides information and strategies for teachers, families, and paras to support the education of all students. The modules are available in English and Spanish. View the modules here: [E-Learning Modules](#).

ODP Releases 2019-2020 Annual Comprehensive Employment Report

The Office of Developmental Programs (ODP) is pleased to announce the release of the second Annual Comprehensive Employment report. The ODP Comprehensive Employment Report provides important performance data to individuals, families, advocates, providers, government officials, and taxpayers. ODP is committed to supporting individuals with an intellectual disability or autism to achieve their goals towards competitive integrated employment. Read the report here: [2019-2020 Annual Comprehensive Employment Report](#).

Personal Stories Collection

Last October, the Pennsylvania Autism Training Conference compiled a collection of short stories and videos submitted by PA self-advocates. [Personal Stories Collection Link](#).

Apply for Free Access to Special Education Advocacy Curriculum

In partnership with Comcast NBCUniversal, The Arc is providing scholarships for eligible families of color and low-income households who reside in Comcast regions to receive free online access to [The Arc@School's Special Education Advocacy Curriculum](#) (normally a \$99 value). The scholarship application process is easy and only takes a few minutes to complete. [Apply here for Special Education Advocacy Curriculum](#) to start learning how to navigate the special education system!

CONTACT PIE

Contact the PIE Team with any questions, comments, suggestions, or information to share at PIE, c/o The Arc of Pennsylvania, 1007 Mumma Road, Suite 100, Lemoyne, PA 17043, by email at pie@thearc-pa.org or by phone at 800-692-7258.

- o **A Slice of Pie** is available by email and contains hyperlinks for ease of accessing websites and internet documents and resources.
- o PIE Alerts, PIE Information, and PIE Job Postings are available by email to keep people informed about disability issues between newsletters.
- o Sign up for A Slice of Pie or PIE electronic messages by phone at 800-692-7258 or by emailing pie@thearc-pa.org.
- o Individuals who already get A Slice of Pie and/or PIE electronic messages can make changes at any time by clicking "Update Profile/Email Address" at the end of any PIE email message.
- o A Slice of Pie is available at the Developmental Disabilities Council website www.paddc.org, by clicking on "Publications" and "Slice of Pie". Archived editions can also be found there.
- o **A Slice of Pie** is available in alternate format upon request.
- o The PIE office will download, copy, and mail information mentioned in A Slice of Pie upon request.

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Change of Information?

We want to be certain that you do not miss an issue of *A Slice of Pie*, so please send name or address changes either by phone 800-692-7258 or by email to pie@thearcpcpa.org. Thank you.

The PIE Team

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