

A Slice of Pie

Communication
from the Policy
Information Exchange

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

ODP and OMHSAS Release Intellectual/Developmental Disability/Autism Telehealth Report

The Pennsylvania Office of Developmental Programs (ODP) and the Office of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services (OMHSAS) released their findings from a joint project titled [“Behavioral Health Telehealth Services for Individuals with Intellectual Disabilities and/or Autism.”](#) ODP and OMHSAS wanted to better understand the use of behavioral health telehealth services for individuals with intellectual/developmental disabilities/autism in Pennsylvania. In particular, they sought:

- To outline recommendations to optimize the use of behavioral health telehealth with the intellectual/developmental disabilities/autism population;
- To increase awareness of Pennsylvania intellectual/developmental disabilities/autism providers’ and stakeholders’ telehealth use and interest;

- To strengthen ODP and OMHSAS relationships with intellectual/developmental disabilities/autism stakeholders; and
- To clarify and develop best practices for supporting co-occurring/complex diagnoses for the intellectual/developmental disabilities/autism population.

ODP and OMHSAS plan to build upon the relationships formed during this process, to continue to improve telehealth as a modality, and to create the foundation to adapt and evolve as technology changes.

Over approximately six months, the Steering

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Committee met with 139 stakeholders, self-advocates, families and friends of individuals with intellectual/developmental disabilities/autism, Behavioral Health providers, and intellectual/developmental disabilities/autism providers. Stakeholders provided feedback on their experience with telehealth for Behavioral Health services, including its benefits, challenges, and opportunities. Participation occurred through an online survey, virtual small group discussions at the Town Hall, and virtual focus group meetings.

The incredible engagement from stakeholders throughout the Behavioral Health Telehealth Services for intellectual/developmental disabilities/autism project provided vital information for Steering Committee consideration. The candid feedback educated all involved on how individuals with intellectual/developmental disabilities/autism experience telehealth in Pennsylvania and is already informing policy change at ODP and OMHSAS. While change takes time, the State is committed to ensuring individuals with intellectual/developmental disabilities/autism are able to access the services they need in the modality they prefer.

[The full report is available here.](#)

Recommendations for Addressing COVID-19 Health Disparities Among the Disability Community

A new report by The Arc of Pennsylvania proposes that the Pennsylvania Department of Health involve the disability community in policy making and healthcare decisions to address health disparities worsened by the COVID-19 pandemic.

[Read Full Report Here.](#)

Governor Shapiro Announces Rate Assessment

Governor Shapiro announced today during the National Association of Direct Support Professionals Convention that the Office of Developmental Programs (ODP) must immediately conduct a rate assessment of current reimbursement rates for Intellectual/developmental

disabilities/autism home and community-based services. We will share additional information as it becomes available.

[Watch Video Here.](#)

New Pennsylvania Department of Education Policy

Students in Pennsylvania who are eligible under the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) may now access a Free and Appropriate Education (FAPE) until their 22nd birthday. This means that if a student would have traditionally finished high school during or after the school year that they turned 21 years old, they may now remain until they are 22 years old. This includes students that exited school last year in the 2022-2023 school term.

[Find Guidance Here.](#)

[Full Policy Here.](#)

Include Me Looking for Middle Schoolers!

Include Me is seeking students presenters for the SAID-IT Program. Watch the recorded Facebook Live where we share details about our new program being launched to provide creative platforms of expression for middle-school students across PA to improve inclusivity in school cultures. This program is funded in part by the PA Developmental Disabilities Council.

[Information Facebook Live Available Here.](#)

PA Master Plan for Older Adults/ People with Disabilities - White Paper

“The White Paper is an overview of the origins, development process and the core tenets that are shaping this foundational 10-year aging plan for Pennsylvania and is being offered to aging stakeholders and all interested individuals as a reference guide when formulating and submitting comments on the development of the plan.”

[View Master Plan White Paper Here.](#)

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Disability Community Involvement Key to Solving Health Disparities

“The meaningful involvement of people with disabilities at all levels was the first of 10 core solutions recommended to the Pennsylvania Department of Health for it to implement in helping to address COVID-19 health care barriers among people with disabilities, their families, and caregivers. Those barriers were identified in a report last year from the Task Force and The Arc, which identified effects the COVID-19 emergency response had on the disability community.”

[Read Full Article Here.](#)

PennLive Editorial: When a Governor Shows Compassion that Impacts Thousands of Lives, It’s Reason for High Praise

“Gov. Josh Shapiro has shown considerable compassion in hearing the pleas of thousands of families in Pennsylvania that are caring for loved ones with intellectual disabilities. These families have been begging for help for years, and they were facing catastrophe.”

[Read Full Article Here.](#)

Transforming Community Living (Virtual Event) – October 26, 2023

Join Western Pennsylvania Disability History and Action Consortium for a morning of empowerment, education, and discussion as we examine the development of home- and community-based services and look to the future. We are excited to present an engaging program featuring two impactful short films, a keynote address by a distinguished guest, and a thought-provoking panel discussion with experts in the field.

[Register Here.](#)

Pennsylvania Home and Community Based Services Transition Plan

Pennsylvania’s Final Statewide Transition Plan

was approved by the Centers of Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) on August 24, 2023.

[View Full Final Rule Statewide Transition Plan Here.](#)

Pennsylvania Workforce Plan Listening Sessions

The PA Workforce Development Board invites you to provide input on Pennsylvania’s 2024-2028 workforce development strategies for the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) state plan. There are three in-person sessions available and one virtual session. Please click on the link below to learn.

[More Information Available Here.](#)

Inside Aging Newsletter

The Pennsylvania Department of Aging has released their newsletter with information regarding important upcoming events, updates, and legislative updates.

[View Full Newsletter Here.](#)

Governor Shapiro Proclaims October 2023 as Down Syndrome Awareness Month

Governor Shapiro has proclaimed October 2023 as Down Syndrome Awareness Month. “In support of individuals with Down syndrome, as well as their families, advocates, researchers, and medical professionals, I encourage all Pennsylvanians to work together to promote respect and inclusion of individuals with Down syndrome and to celebrate their accomplishments and contributions.”

Shapiro Administration Reminds Pennsylvanians and Providers that Medicaid, CHIP Cover COVID-19 Test, Vaccine, and Treatment Costs

Medicaid, including the Medicaid managed care organizations, is required to provide coverage for COVID-19 vaccines, vaccine administration,

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testing, treatment, and stand-alone vaccine counseling for beneficiaries under 21 without cost sharing, at least through September 30, 2024. This includes new booster shots as they are approved by the federal Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and recommended by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. In addition, Medicaid must cover all types of FDA-approved COVID-19 diagnostic and screening tests, including those done at testing sites, at home tests that are sent to a laboratory for processing, and at-home tests that do not require a laboratory.

In addition to free testing available through Medicaid, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services recently announced that beginning September 25, 2023, all U.S. households can order four free at-home tests to be delivered to them.

[Order Free At-Home Tests Here.](#)

Governor Shapiro Proclaims October 2023 as Disability Employment Awareness Month

Governor Shapiro has proclaimed October 2023 as Disability Employment Awareness Month to “encourage all Pennsylvanians to provide their support in hiring and retaining workers with disabilities.”

[Read Proclamation Here.](#)

Bills of Interest

Below we summarize some bills of interest to the disability community from the 2023-2024 Session. For more information about these bills or any other state legislative activity, go to <https://www.legis.state.pa.us/>.

HB 611. Introduced by Representative Jordan A. Harris (D-Philadelphia). Budget bill for the fiscal year July 1, 2023, to June 30, 2024. Signed in House, July 5, 2023. Signed in Senate, Aug. 3, 2023. Approved by the Governor, Aug. 3, 2023. Becoming Act No. 1A of 2023, Aug. 3, 2023.

[\(Line Item Veto\)](#) Referred to House Rules, Sept. 22, 2023.

Impact: 2023-2024 fiscal year budget bill.

HB 1587. Introduced by Representative Joe Webster (D-Montgomery). This bill would require high schools to hire professional **transition coordinators** to ensure these students with disabilities are ready and able to take on a new career. Referred to Education, July 25, 2023.

Impact: Require at least one transition coordinator in each high school so that students with disabilities can gain help in finding a job.

HB 1593. Introduced by Representative Danielle Otten (D-Chester). This bill would expand access to **Early Intervention** services to children born to mothers at high-risk for or diagnosed with postpartum depression and children who have experienced Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) Voted favorably from House Children and Youth, October 4, 2023.

Impact: Expand access to Early Intervention for mothers and children.

HB 1668. Introduced by Representative Robert W. Mercuri (R-Allegheny). This bill would amend Title 75 (Vehicles) to allow the option for an individual who is diagnosed with an **Autism Spectrum Disorder** to request to have a notation of their diagnosis placed on their driver’s license or identification card. Referred to Transportation, Sept. 12, 2023.

Impact: Would allow individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorder to choose if they would like to have a notation on ID that indicates their diagnosis.

HB 1680. Introduced by Representative Christina D. Sappey (D-Chester). This bill would provide for **deaf and hard of hearing education in terms of courses of study**. Referred to Education, Sept. 13, 2023.

Impact: Help to educate on hearing loss prevention and associated stigma by requiring the PA Department of Education to create hearing curriculum that school districts may choose to offer.

HB 301. Introduced by Representative Patrick J. Harkins (D-Erie). This bill would remove **derogatory terms/language** from the PA School Code. Referred to Education, March 10, 2023. Third consideration and Final Passage, April 26, 2023. Referred to Senate Education, May 3, 2023.

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Re-referred to Senate Appropriations, June 7, 2023.

Impact: Would remove the use of derogatory terms and language in the PA School Code.

HB 342. Introduced by Representative Dan L. Miller (D-Allegheny). This bill would provide for **students with disabilities** at institutions of higher education. Referred to Human Services, March 13, 2023.

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 348. 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, March 13, 2023.

Impact: May allow for an individual with a disability to be appointed to a temporary position, or trial work period, so that the individual may be observed performing the duties of said job.

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, March 14, 2023. Final passage, May 23, 2023. Referred to Senate Health and Human Services, June 2, 2023.

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 500. Introduced by Representative Brandon J. Markosek (D-Allegheny). This bill 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.

Referred to State Government, March 17, 2023.

Impact: Provides absentee ballots printed in braille.

HB 503. Introduced by Representative Nancy Guenst (D-Montgomery). This bill would protect all Pennsylvanians **against discrimination** and provide equal opportunity, regardless of marital status or family caregiver status in employment, housing and public accommodation. Referred to State Government, March 17, 2023. Re-committed to Rules, June 28, 2023.

Impact: Prohibits hiring discrimination against caregivers.

HB 537. Introduced by Representative Ann Flood (R-Northampton). This will would require the Departments of Health, Human Services, and Aging to communicate on a regular basis to ensure that any reports of **elder abuse** which are made to any agency listed are placed in the correct location to be properly investigated. Referred to Aging and Older Adults Services, March 20, 2023.

Impact: Streamline the process of investigating elder abuse.

HB 661. Introduced by Representative Dan L. Miller (D-Allegheny). This bill would provide for **intellectual disability and autism** fee schedule rates. Referred to Human Services, March 21, 2023.

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 705. Introduced by Representative Malcolm Kenyatta (D-Philadelphia). This bill would provide for definitions, for eligibility and for the **medically needy** and determination of eligibility. Referred to Human Services, March 27, 2023.

Impact: Would provide emergency relief to those who previously received support through General Assistance (GA).

HB 715. Introduced by Representative Carol Kazeem (D-Delaware). This still would enhance oversight of **personal care homes**. Referred to Human Services, March 27, 2023.

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Impact: Require unannounced inspections of personal care homes with three or fewer residents.

HB 806. Introduced by Representative Liz Hanbidge (D-Montgomery). This bill would improve access to **Voting** for people with disabilities. Referred to State Government, April 3, 2023.

Impact: Increase accessibility of voting by allowing ballots to be brought outside.

HB 808. Introduced by Representative Liz Hanbidge (D-Montgomery). This bill would require that Pennsylvanians deemed eligible for the **HCBS waiver** program receive their HCBS waiver benefits no later than 90 days after eligibility for Medicaid. Referred to Human Services, April 3, 2023.

Impact: End the waitlist for HCBS to ensure that people receive a waiver 90 days after eligibility.

HB 849. Introduced by Representative Michael H. Schlossberg (D-Lehigh). This will provide for **adult mental health** Program funding. Referred to Human Services, April 10, 2023. Referred to Senate Health and Human Services, June 14, 2023. Also, see **SB 605**.

Impact: Would allocate funds to mental health services and workforce development.

HB 844. Introduced by Representative Ed Neilson (D-Philadelphia). This bill would establish the Long-Term Services and Supports Commission, the Long-Term Services and Supports Council and the **Long-Term Services and Supports** Trust Fund, imposing duties on the Department of Human Services and the Department of Revenue and imposing a payroll premium. Referred to Human Services, April 10, 2023.

Impact: Established a fund to provide up to \$36,500 in lifetime benefits to eligible beneficiaries for long term care services, such as respite care, in-home caregiving, time in a nursing home/assisted living facility, or home modifications.

HB 876. Introduced by Representative Mike Cabell (R-Luzerne). This bill would require any provider which seeks to operate in the Medicaid program use either an NPI or register for SPI. The Department of Human Services would be required to establish a **standardized program**

for any company which lacks an NPI and must register for provider identification with the state. Referred to Human Services April 10, 2023. Re-committed to Rules, July 5, 2023.

Impact: Would require providers to register for provider identification with the state.

HB 1100. Introduced by Representative Steve Samuelson (D-Northampton). This bill would raise the income limit for **senior tax/rent rebate**. Referred to Finance May 3, 2023. Signed in House, July 5, 2023.

Impact: Would increase income limits for the Property Tax / Rent Rebate Program.

HB 1104. Introduced by Representative Tarik Khan (D-Philadelphia). This bill would prohibit the charging of admission **fees** for events for personal care attendants of persons with disabilities; and imposing penalties. Referred to Human Services, May 5, 2023. Referred to Tourism and Economic and Recreational Development, June 22, 2023. Also, see **SB 735**.

Impact: Require waived admission fees for personal care attendants of people with disabilities.

HB 1184. Introduced by Representative Patty Kim (D-Dauphin). This bill would extend the **Pennsylvania's premier prescription drug assistance programs for seniors cost of living adjustment** moratorium to December 31, 2025, allowing thousands of older Pennsylvanians to retain the benefit of PACE and PACENET. Referred to Aging and Older Adults Services, May 18, 2023. Referred to Senate Aging and Youth June 26, 2023. Also, see **SB 607**.

Impact: Would benefit nearly 29,400 seniors in PA by extending the prescription drug assistance programs for seniors to 2025 instead of 2023.

HB 1214. Introduced by Representative Tarah Probst (D-Munroe). This bill would direct a school entity to determine whether a child is a **child with a disability** under Federal law. Referred to Education, May 22, 2023.

Impact: Require schools to do an initial evaluation to determine whether a child has a disability.

HB 1218. Introduced by Representative Melissa Cerrato (D-Montgomery). This bill would provide

for payments for **spousal personal care services**. Referred to Human Services, May 24, 2023. Third consideration and final passage, July 7, 2023. Referred to Senate Health and Human Services, July 17, 2023.

Impact: Would establish a program to allow spouse caregivers to receive payments.

HB 1294. Introduced by Representative Ismail Smith-Wade-El (D-Lancaster). This bill would create The **Commonwealth Housing Council** to develop a uniform housing strategy. Referred to Housing and Community Development, June 1, 2023. Also, see SB 376.

Impact: Create a Commonwealth Housing Council to develop housing goals, benchmarks, and priorities.

HB 1300. Introduced by Representative Thomas L. Mehaffie (R-Dauphin). This bill would add the **Long-Term Care Ombudsman** to the Long-Term Care Council. Referred to Aging and Adult Services, May 20, 2023. Referred to Senate Aging and Youth, June 25, 2023. Re-referred to the Senate Appropriations Committee, June 28, 2023.

Impact: By adding a Long-Term Care Ombudsman to the Long-Term Care Council, this would allow for stronger advocacy of the older adult community.

HB 1305. Introduced by Representative Stephen Kinsey (D-Philadelphia). This bill would provide for **behavioral health crisis** intervention; and establishing the 988 Fund. Referred to Human Services, June 2, 2023. Referred to Health and Human Services, June 29, 2023.

Impact: Establish funding for PA's 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline.

HB 1397. Introduced by Representative Darisha K. Parker (D-Philadelphia). This bill would strengthen Pennsylvania's **Guardianship Law**. Referred to Judiciary, June 13, 2023.

Impact: Help prevent fraud, abuse, and exploitation in PA's guardianship system.

HB 1421. Introduced by Representative Benjamin V. Sanchez (D-Montgomery). This bill would allow an individual on the **autism spectrum** to receive notation on their **driver's license** or identification card indicating their condition. This notation

will alert emergency responders to the individual's condition and allow them to interact with the person in a more appropriate fashion. This bill will also establish an account to which individuals applying for a driver's license or identification card may give a voluntary \$3 contribution. These funds will be used in providing education and training to working professionals who interact with individuals on the autism spectrum. Referred to Transportation, June 15, 2023.

Impact: Would allow individuals with autism to receive a notation on their driver's license or identification indicating their autism diagnosis.

HB 1495. Introduced by Representative Paul Friel (D-Chester). This bill would provide for **special education in charter schools**. Referred to Education, June 22, 2023.

Impact: This would change the funding of charter schools to be determined by the total number of special education students who live in that school district.

HB 1527. Introduced by Representative Benjamin V. Sanchez (D-Montgomery). This bill would increase the **Personal Needs Allowance** deduction for medical assistance-eligible persons in nursing facilities. Referred to Aging and Adult Services, June 27, 2023.

Impact: Increase the personal needs allowance deduction from \$45 per month to \$60 per month for Medical Assistance eligible residents living in nursing facilities.

HB 1537. Introduced by Representative Barbara Gleim (R-Cumberland). This bill would increase the age of **minor consent** to treat for medical, dental and mental health from 14 years of age to 16 years of age. In addition, the legislation would also have an exemption for special need individuals who may not be capable of making important medical decisions on their own without parental guidance. Referred to Health, June 28, 2023.

Impact: Increase the age of minor consent from 14 to 16 years old, with an exemption for children with disabilities.

HB 1545. Introduced by Representative Joe Hogan (R-Bucks). This bill would create the **digital mental health services** pilot program in

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the Department of Education (PDE). Referred to Education, June 29, 2023.

Impact: Requires the Department of Education to create a digital mental health services pilot program in which 50 schools could participate in the program.

SB 119. 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, January 18, 2023.

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 376. Introduced by Senator Vincent J. Hughes (D-Montgomery). This bill would establish **Commonwealth Housing Council**. Referred to Urban Affairs and Housing, February 16, 2023. Also, see HB 1294.

Impact: Establish a Commonwealth Housing Council to develop housing goals and create a resource guide.

SB 401. Introduced by Senator Wayne D. Fontana (D-Allegheny). This bill would change Pennsylvania's **voting system** so that all elections would be conducted entirely by mail. It would also plan to add a provision that would require ballot drop boxes be placed in every municipality building. Referred to State Government, March 15, 2023.

Impact: Would make all voting be done by mail-in ballots.

SB 451. Introduced by Senator Christine M. Tartaglione (D-Philadelphia). This bill would amend Title 71 and give people with disabilities additional points on the **State Civil Service Exam**. Referred to State Government, March 14, 2023.

Impact: By giving additional points to people with disabilities on the State Civil Service Exam, this would allow PA to be a leader in disability hiring.

SB 452. 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 14, 2023.

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

SB 506. Introduced by Senator Lisa Baker (R – Luzerne). This bill would strengthen the state's **guardianship laws**. Referred to Senate Judiciary on March 14, 2023. Referred to House Judiciary, June 27, 2023.

Impact: This bill would work to make sure that situations regarding abuse and exploitation in guardianship are prevented across the state by limiting guardianship to a last resort option.

SB 511. Introduced by Senator Christine M. Tartaglione (D-Philadelphia). This bill would provide Insurance **Coverage for Wheelchair Maintenance**. Referred to Health and Human Services, March 15, 2023.

Impact: Would require that wheelchair users in the Commonwealth, whether publicly or privately insured, have access to two wheelchair maintenance well-visits per year covered by their insurance

SB 605. Senator Maria Collett (D-Montgomery). This bill would provide for **adult mental health** program funding. Referred to Health and Human Services, April 19, 2023. Also, see **HB 849**.

Impact: Would allocate funds to mental health services and workforce development.

SB 607. Introduced by Senator Judy Ward (R-Blair). This bill would extend the **PACE/PACENET** COLA moratorium to December 31, 2025, allowing thousands of older Pennsylvanians to retain the benefit of PACE and PACENET. Referred to Senate Aging and Youth April 28, 2023. Referred to House Aging and Older Adults Services, June 20, 2023. Also, see **HB 1184**.

Impact: Would benefit nearly 29,400 seniors in PA by extending the prescription drug assistance programs for seniors to 2025 instead of 2023.

SB 735. Introduced by Senator Art Haywood (D-Montgomery). This bill would prohibit the charging of **admission fees** for events for personal care attendants of person with disability; and imposing penalties. Referred to Health and Human

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Services, June 6, 2023. Also, see **HB 1104**.

Impact: Require waived admission fees for personal care attendants of people with disabilities.

SB 813. 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, June 14, 2023.

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 840. Introduced by Senator Rosemary Brown (R-Monroe). This bill would establish the **Alzheimer's Disease and Related Disorders Division**, the Alzheimer's Disease and Related Disorders Advisory Committee and the Alzheimer's Disease and Related Disorders State Plan; and making an appropriation. Referred to Aging and Youth, July 11, 2023.

Impact: Expand the way in which PA addresses Alzheimer's Disease and Related Disorder Division (ADRD) by establishing a permanent division and an advisory committee.

SB 855. Introduced by Senator Doug Mastriano (R-Adams). This bill would create a Statewide registry of perpetrators of **abuse in facilities**. Referred to Aging and Youth, July 27, 2023.

Impact: Establishment of a list of individuals who were found to have committed abuse, neglect, abandonment, or exploitation of older adults in facilities.

Resolutions

HR 191. Introduced by Representative Stephen Kinsey (D-Philadelphia). This resolution would recognize October 2023 as "Special Needs Law Month". Referred to House Human Services, August 29, 2023.

Impact: By recognizing "Special Needs Law Month," Pennsylvania can raise awareness for vital resources that provide financial assistance to individuals with special needs and their loved ones.

HR 188. Introduced by Representative Stephen Kinsey (D-Philadelphia). This resolution would designate September 10-16 as "Direct Support Professionals Week" in PA. Reported as committed from House Human Services, October 4, 2023.

Impact: By designating this week as "Direct Support Professionals Week" there can be the recognition of the important work these professionals do.

HR 38. Introduced by Representative Dan L. Miller (D-Allegheny). This Resolution would conduct a study on public **transportation services for individuals with disabilities**, establish a legislative task force and advisory committee and issue a report of findings and recommendations to the House of Representatives. Referred to Transportation, March 13, 2023.

Impact: Directs the Joint State Government Commission to establish a legislative task force on public transportation efficacy, with a specific focus on the impact of Pennsylvania's current delivery of services to individuals with disabilities.

HR 165. Introduced by Representative Patty Kim (D-Dauphin). This Resolution directs the Legislative Budget and Finance Committee to conduct a study on the effect of **workforce shortages** on State supported Medicaid home and community-based services waiver programs and the Pennsylvania Lottery funded OPTIONS programs in this Commonwealth. Referred to Aging and Adult Services, June 27, 2023. Adopted in House, October 3, 2023

Impact: Will examine wage rates for home health aides, personal care attendants, direct support professionals, older adult daily living center providers, and community-based mental health providers in the HCBS system.

HR166. Introduced by Representative Joe Hogan (R-Bucks). This Resolution designates the month of July 2023 as "**Disability Pride Month**" in Pennsylvania. Referred to Human Services, June 27, 2023. Reported as committed, June 28, 2023.

Impact: Designates the month of July 2023 as "Disability Pride Month" in Pennsylvania.

HR 174. Introduced by Representative James B.

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Struzzi II (R-Indiana). This Resolution directs the Legislative Budget and Finance Committee to conduct a study and issue a report on the current status, management and implementation of mass or public transit in Pennsylvania's rural communities. Referred to Transportation, July 7, 2023.

Impact: Would direct a comprehensive study on public transit in rural PA.

SR 35. Introduced by Christine M. Tartaglione (D-Philadelphia). This Resolution designates the month of March 2023 as “Disability Awareness Month” in Pennsylvania. Referred to Rules and Executive Nominations, Feb. 21, 2023.

Impact: Designates the month of March 2023 as “Disability Awareness Month” in Pennsylvania.

National News

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Proposed Rule

The US Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Secretary Xavier Becerra announced a rule proposed by the HHS Office for Civil Rights that would update regulations implementing Section 504 of the Rehab Act of 1973, which prohibits disability discrimination by recipients of federal funding. This is the first comprehensive update in over 40 years.

Highlights of these proposed changes include:

- Discrimination in medical treatment
- Accessibility of medical equipment
- Web, mobile app, and kiosk accessibility
- Child welfare programs and activities
- Community integration
- Value assessments methods

[Fact Sheet Available Here.](#)

[Notice for Proposed Rulemaking Available Here](#)

The comment period ends on November 13th, 2024.

October 2023: National Disability Employment Awareness Month

Observed each October, National Disability Employment Awareness Month (NDEAM) celebrates the contributions of America's workers with disabilities past and present and showcases supportive, inclusive employment policies and practices that benefit employers and employees. ODEP has chosen “Advancing Access and Equity” as the theme for NDEAM 2023.

[Read Full Article Here.](#)

NIH Designated People with Disabilities as a Population with Health Disparities

“This designation recognizes the importance and need for research advances to improve our understanding of the complexities leading to disparate health outcomes and multilevel interventions,” said Dr. Pérez-Stable. “Toward this effort, NIMHD and other NIH institutes launched a new research program to better understand the health disparities faced by people with disabilities who are also part of other populations designated as having health disparities.”

[Read Press Release Here.](#)

The Rehabilitation Act of 1973 Turns 50

“September 26, 2023 marks the 50th anniversary of the passage of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the first civil rights legislation protecting disabled people from discrimination. It prohibits discrimination on the basis of disability in programs receiving federal financial assistance or conducted by federal agencies, in federal employment, and in the employment practices of federal contractors”

[Read Full Article Here.](#)

Examining 50 Years of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973

Since the passage of the Rehab Act in 1973, there have been substantial changes to the legal landscape for workers with disabilities fueled by

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the advocacy of the disability rights community, often with bipartisan support. Notably, in 1990, the landmark Americans with Disabilities Act was enacted, prohibiting discrimination on the basis of disability in the workplace and mainstreaming the concept of reasonable accommodations. In 1999, the Supreme Court issued the historic decision in *Olmstead* interpreting the ADA to require public entities to provide qualified individuals with disabilities services in the most integrated setting appropriate to their needs. Finally, since 2014, Section 511 of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) places important limits on the ability of employers to pay subminimum wages to workers with disabilities under section 14(c) certificates.

[Read Full Article Here.](#)

Disability Voting Rights Week

Disability Voting Rights Week is September 11-15. This is a time to build advocacy power through voter registration, voter education, and community engagement. If people with disabilities voted at the same rate as people without disabilities, there would be 2 million more voters. Unfortunately, 1 in 7 voters with disabilities had difficulty voting in 2022, up from 1 in 9 in 2020. We must

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@thearcpa.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@thearcpa.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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break down barriers and make voting accessible.

Input Needed: Proposed Regulations for Adult Protective Services Programs

Administration for Community Living (ACL) is seeking input on a proposed rule to establish the first-ever federal regulations for adult protective services (APS) programs. APS programs across the country support older adults and adults with disabilities who experience, or who are at risk of, abuse, neglect, self-neglect, or financial exploitation. APS programs investigate reports of maltreatment; conduct case planning, monitoring, and evaluation; and provide, or connect people who have experienced maltreatment to, a variety of medical, social service, economic, legal, housing, law enforcement, and other protective, emergency, or support services to help them recover. Over the past decade, ACL has led federal efforts to support the critical work of APS programs through a variety of initiatives.

[View Fact Sheet Here.](#)

[More Information and How to Provide Feedback Here](#)

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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@thearcpa.org.
Thank you.

The PIE Team

THE ARC OF PENNSYLVANIA

PIE STAFF:

Sherri Landis

Alexa Brill

Emma Nolan

CONSULTANTS:

Vini Portzline