



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

Governor Shapiro Delivers Budget Address

On Tuesday, February 6, 2024, Governor Shapiro delivered his second budget address in the Capitol Rotunda. His proposed budget totals 48.3 billion dollars for the 2024-2025 fiscal year. Below we summarize some items of interest to the disability community. The budget proposal includes several spending initiatives, including addressing access to critical services through provider rate increases and increases in education funding.

Health and Human Services

- The Governor proposes a \$215 million increase– and draws down another \$266 million in federal funds – to provide more resources for home and community-based service providers,

- so they in turn can pay competitive rates to attract and retain the staff who provide these essential services. There is also a proposed \$36 million to help get more Pennsylvanians the home and community-based services they need.
- Autism Intervention and Services received a 13.13% increase or \$4,159,000 increase in funds.
- Early Intervention (birth to 3 years old) received a proposed 8.98% increase or \$16,664,000 increase in funds.

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- State funds for ID State Centers would increase by about \$17 million.
- Community Health Choices would increase by nearly \$220 million which is a 4.21% increase.

### **Labor and Industry**

- Assistive Technology Demonstration and Training, Assistive Technology Devices, Centers for Independent Living, and Supported Employed were all level funded from last fiscal year.
- OVR State Match/Transfer to Vocational Rehabilitation received a proposed 1.62% increase or an increase of \$776,000.

### **Education**

- Governor Shapiro proposes nearly \$1.1 billion increase in basic education funding. This is a result of the Basic Education Funding Commission’s majority report that laid out the need for a significant investment in funding. Of this \$1.1 billion, \$900 million is a first-year investment and the remaining \$200 million will be distributed through the Basic Education Funding Formula.
- This proposed budget also includes \$50 million increase for special education funding.
- Early Intervention (3 – 5 years old) received a \$17 million increase.

[Watch Budget Address and Learn More Here](#)

## **Pennsylvania Human Relations Commission Creates Civil Rights Division**

New for 2024, the Pennsylvania Human Relations Commission (PHRC) is launching a Civil Rights Division. The Civil Rights Division will include several Civil Rights Outreach Coordinators (CROCS) and a supervisor. Some of the CROCs responsibilities will include investigating civil conflicts and incidents and enforcing anti-discrimination laws to safeguard the rights of protected groups, including people with disabilities.

[Read Press Release Here](#)

## **TechOWL Community Space Grand Opening**

“Explore our new public community space dedicated to assistive technology! During open hours, test out cutting-edge vision equipment, mobility devices, and other assistive tech options. Drop off or pick up used equipment like walkers, shower chairs, and commodes. Discover accessible video gaming with the Xbox Adaptive Controller. See 3D printing in action for creating assistive devices, and learn basic wheelchair repair and maintenance. Join us for a hands-on experience in the world of assistive technology.”

Community Space schedule:

- Monday 10:00 AM-2:00 PM
- Tuesday 1:00 PM-5:00 PM
- Wednesday 10:00 AM-2:00 PM
- Thursday 1:00 PM-5:00 PM
- By appointment: Email [TechOWL@temple.edu](mailto:TechOWL@temple.edu)

[Learn More Here](#)

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Go to our digital version of Slice at <https://www.paddc.org/publications/slice-of-pie/> to access the links.

## Special Election Results

The results of the Special Election for the seat vacated by State Representative John Galloway (D-Bucks) are in and the seat has been retained by the Democrats. Jim Prokopiak (D) bested Candace Cabanas (R) by 3,383 votes. The House now stands in the control of the Democrats 102-100...but that's not exactly the case. With State Representative Joe Kerwin (R-Dauphin) on leave for the National Guard, from a voting perspective, the voting majority is effectively 102-99 in favor of the Democrats as Representative Kerwin is not permitted to cast a vote while in service (per the National Guard).

With the resignation of State Representative Joseph Adams (R-Wayne) another Special Election will be held for the 139th Legislative District in conjunction with the Pennsylvania Primary on April 23rd. Depending on the outcome, the majority held by the House Democrats could dwindle to just one.

## DHS Launches New Online Tool

Pennsylvania Department of Human Services (DHS) recently launched PA Navigate – an online tool to connect Pennsylvanians with community-based organizations, county and state agencies, and healthcare providers for referrals to resources such as food, shelter, transportation, etc.

[Sign Up or Learn More Here](#)

## Register to Vote for the PA Primary Election

The Pennsylvania Primary Election is April 23rd, 2024. The last day to register to vote is April 8th and the last day to request mail-in or absentee ballots is April 16th.

[Learn More Here](#)

# Federal News

## Meeting of the President's Committee for People with Intellectual Disabilities

The [President's Committee for People with Intellectual Disabilities](#) (PCPID) will host a virtual meeting for its members to address issues surrounding home and community-based services (HCBS) to be examined in the Committee's Report to the President. All the PCPID meetings, in any format, are open to the public. This virtual meeting will be conducted in a discussion format with committee members addressing the issues and recommendations identified by PCPID workgroups proposing to be incorporated in the PCPID Report to the President.

View more details published in the [Federal Register notice](#).

[Register Here](#)

## Feds Move to Enforce Accessibility Standards for Medical Equipment

“Doctor's offices often lack examination tables, weight scales and other diagnostic equipment that are accessible to people with disabilities. Now, the U.S. Department of Justice is trying to change that.

The agency is proposing a rule under the Americans with Disabilities Act that would adopt technical standards spelling out the responsibilities that hospitals and health care clinics operated by state or local governments have under the law.”

Comments were due on February 12th, 2024.

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Go to our digital version of Slice at <https://www.paddc.org/publications/slice-of-pie/> to access the links.

[Read Full Article Here](#)

[Read the Notice for Proposed Rule Making](#)

## **The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Releases New Training for Including People with Disabilities in Disaster Operations**

“The purpose of this course is to increase awareness and understanding of the need for full inclusion of disaster survivors and FEMA staff who are people with disabilities. It is designed for all personnel involved in disaster operations. It provides an introductory overview of information and strategies to include people with disabilities during mitigation, preparedness, response, and recovery efforts. It also explains the importance of disability equity and inclusion and provides guidance to FEMA staff on how they can ensure physical, program, and communication access to the whole community. The learner must achieve a minimum passing score of 75%; on final knowledge assessments or demonstrate mastery on performance assessments or research assignments to earn the IACET CEU.”

Please note that this program now requires a free FEMA Student ID Number (SID) to be used.

[Learn More Here](#)

## **Department of Education Released Myths and Facts Surrounding Assistive Technology Devices and Services**

The US Department of Education has created a new document to clarify assistive technology (AT) requirements under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). The document dispels common misconceptions and provides examples of the use of AT devices and services for students with disabilities. The document is designed for parents, early intervention service providers, special educators, general educators, related services personnel, school and district administrators, technology specialists and directors, and employees at state lead agencies and educational agencies.

[Learn More Here](#)

## **Bills of Interest**

**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. Re-referred to Senate Appropriations, June 7, 2023. Approved by the Governor, Dec. 13, 2023, Becoming Act 33 of 2023, December 13, 2023.

Impact: This bill would remove the use of derogatory terms and language in the PA School Code.

**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. Approved by the Governor, December 13, 2023, becoming Act 34 of 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.

**SB 607.** Introduced by Senator Judy Ward (R-Blair). This bill would extend the PACE/PACENET Cost of Living Adjustment (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. Approved by the Governor, December 14, 2023, becoming Act No. 62 of 2023. Also, see HB 1184.

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

**HB 181.** Introduced by Representative Dan Miller (D-Allegheny). This bill would establish the Family and Medical Leave Program and the Family and Medical Leave Fund; conferring powers and imposing duties on the Department of Labor and Industry. Referred to Labor and Industry, March 23, 2023. Referred to Appropriations, December 13, 2023.

Impact: This would help attract hard-working Pennsylvanians so they can care for

themselves and their families when serious illness strikes or when a parent becomes seriously ill by providing employees the ability to invest small deductions from their weekly earnings into a state-managed fund.

**HB 1024.** Introduced by Representative Dan Frankel (D-Allegheny). This bill would provide annual law enforcement training on hate-based intimidation which includes any malicious intent towards an individual based on disability. Referred to Judiciary, April 25, 2023. Referred to Senate Judiciary, November 9, 2023.

Impact: This bill would provide Pennsylvania's law enforcement with the training they need to properly investigate, identify and report crimes of ethnic intimidation.

**HB 1135.** Introduced by Representative Christopher M. Rabb (D-Philadelphia). This bill would increase the minimum wage over time, abolish the sub-minimum wage, protect the gratuities of workers from wage theft, and expand the universe of beneficiaries to include gig workers, incarcerated workers, and neurodivergent workers. Referred to Labor and Industry, May 10, 2023.

Impact: This would increase the minimum wage over time and abolish the sub-minimum wage.

**HB 1287.** Introduced by Representative Patty Kim (D-Dauphin). This bill would increase the minimum wage. Referred to Labor and Industry, June 1, 2023.

Impact: Would increase minimum wage.

**HB 1938.** Introduced by Representative Joseph C. Hohenstein (D-Philadelphia). This bill would provide for Recreational Services for people with disabilities.

Referred to Tourism and Economic and Recreational and Development, January 2, 2024.

Impact: Would provide grants for programs to provide recreational activities for people with disabilities.

**HB 1992.** Introduced by Representative Greg Scott (D-Montgomery). This bill would amend the act of July 9, 1976 (P.L.817, No.143), known as the Mental Health Procedures Act, providing for mental health review officer. Referred to Judiciary, January 31, 2024.

Impact: This bill would reduce the timeframe in which Pennsylvania State Police are notified of a mental health record that prohibits firearm possession in the Mental Health Procedures Act.

**HB 2028.** Introduced by Representative Joseph C. Hohenstein (D-Philadelphia). This bill would provide for appropriate funding to the Disability Inclusive Curriculum Pilot Program that will foster inclusion in our classrooms and teach our students about the notable contributions made by individuals with disabilities. Referred to Appropriations, February 9, 2024.

Impact: This would expand funding sources to allow for PDE to fund the Disability Inclusive Curriculum Pilot Program.

**SB 12.** Senator Christine M. Tartaglione (D-Philadelphia). This bill would raise Pennsylvania's minimum wage to \$15/hour, help raise citizens out of poverty, save state tax dollars as people are less reliant on public assistance, and reinvest a portion of the savings in state-supported childcare and subsidized homecare for seniors and people with disabilities. Referred to Labor and

Industry, June 14, 2023. Remarks, February 7, 2024.

Impact: Would increase minimum wage.

**SB 276.** Introduced by Senator Wayne Langerholc Jr. (R-Bedford). This bill would amend the act of July 9, 1976 (P.L.817, No.143), known as the Mental Health Procedures Act, providing for duty to warn. Referred to Health and Human Services, January 31, 2023.

Impact: Would codify a mental health care practitioner's duty to warn of a specific and immediate threat of serious bodily injury. Will establish clear guidance as to when and who to contact when a patient communicates a propensity to harm an individual or group of individuals.

**SB 506.** Introduced by Senator Lisa Baker (R-Luzerne). This bill would reform Guardianship Laws. Referred to Judiciary, March, 2023. Referred to House Judiciary, June 27, 2023. Approved by the Governor, December 14, 2023, becoming Act 61 of 2023.

Impact: The reforms contained in this legislation are important and necessary to ensure that people with disabilities are not forced into unnecessary guardianship.

**SB 843.** Introduced by Senator David G. Argall (R-Carbon). This bill would further provide for Special Education Funding Commission. Referred to Education, June 26, 2023. Approved by the Governor, December 13, 2023, becoming Act 35 of 2023.

Impact: Would reinstitute the Special Education Funding Commission so that they may recommend changes to the special education funding formula.

**SB 962.** Introduced by Senator Daniel Laughlin (R-Erie). This bill would amend the

Mental Health Procedures Act, providing for involuntary examination and treatment of substance use disorders. Referred to Health and Human Services, October 18, 2023.

Impact: Would enact involuntary commitment laws to Pennsylvania for people suffering from a substance use disorder.

**SB 1015.** Introduced by Senator Tracy Pennycuik (R-Berks). This bill would give businesses 60 days to respond to a notice of website ADA access compliance issues. Referred to Communications and Technology, December 18, 2023.

Impact: This bill would give businesses more time to respond to ADA compliance issues.

**HR 315.** Introduced by Representative Melissa L. Shusterman (D-Chester). This Resolution directs the Joint State Government Commission to 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 Human Services, February 5, 2024.

Impact: This would 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.

## 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@thearcpcpa.org](mailto:pie@thearcpcpa.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@thearcpcpa.org](mailto:pie@thearcpcpa.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](http://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](mailto:pie@thearcpcpa.org). Thank you.

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