

# *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.**

*This project (program, publications, etc.) is supported by a grant from the Pennsylvania Developmental Disabilities Council; in part by grant number 1901PASCDD-02 from the U.S. Administration for Community Living, Department of Health and Human Services, Washington, D.C. 20201. Grantees undertaking projects with government sponsorship are encouraged to express freely their findings and conclusions. Points of view or opinions do not, therefore, necessarily represent official ACL policy.*

## State News

### State Budget Passed Into Law

On July 11, 2024, the PA State Legislature passed the bi-partisan budget and it was immediately signed by Governor Shapiro. The total for all spending during the 2024-2025 fiscal year is \$47.6 billion. The budget boasts dramatic investments to education, economic development, law enforcement and violence prevention, workforce development, affordable housing, health care, public transit and infrastructure, among others. Below we summarize some items of interest to the disability community.

### Health and Human Services

- ID/A Waiver funding saw a \$345

million increase for rate increases, emergency waiting list and performance-based contracting.

- Autism Intervention and Services received a \$3.5 million increase.
- Early Intervention (birth to 3 years old) received a \$9.1 million increase.
- State funds for ID State Centers increased by \$13.8 million.

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- Community Health Choices increased by \$273.4 million.

## **Labor and Industry**

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

## **Education**

- Included a \$100 million increase for special education funding.
- Early Intervention (3 – 5 years old) received a \$32.8 million increase.

[Click here to review all the budget line items by visiting the Office of the Budget website.](#)

## **Democratic state Reps. Bullock, Kinsey resign from PA House**

“Two Democrats in the Pennsylvania House of Representatives resigned from office on Tuesday, setting up special elections in mid-September to fill the vacant seats.

A spokesperson for House Democrats said Tuesday that state Reps. Donna Bullock and Stephen Kinsey, who represented the 195th and 201st Legislative

Districts, respectively, both resigned this week for unrelated reasons.

Bullock, who in June was appointed the new CEO of Project HOME, a Philadelphia-based nonprofit organization dedicated to providing aid to people experiencing homelessness, resigned on Monday.

Kinsey announced in January that he would be retiring from the General Assembly at the end of the 2023-24 legislative session, calling his time in the chamber “the honor of my life.” However, despite the original plans to retire at the end of his term in November, Kinsey’s resignation took effect on Tuesday. No reason was provided for the change in departure date.

House Speaker Joanna McClinton signed two writs of election scheduling the special elections for both seats on Tuesday, Sept. 17, 2024.”

Representative Kinsey was a champion for people with disabilities during his time in the PA House of Representatives. His leadership as the Majority Chair of the House Human Services Committee was unparalleled.

[Read the full article here](#)

## **Register to Vote for the General Election**

The General Election is Tuesday, November 5, 2024. In Pennsylvania we will vote for U.S. President

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In this election, Pennsylvanians vote for federal and state officials including:

- U.S. president
- U.S. senators and U.S. representatives to Congress
- Pennsylvania General Assembly members (state Senators and state Representatives)

The last day to register to vote is October 21, 2024 if you want to vote in this election.

If you would like to apply for a mail-in ballot, the deadline is October 29, 2024.

Get all the information you need to vote in Pennsylvania by visiting the [PA Department of State website](#).

## Federal News

### **Changes to Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973**

The Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Office for Civil Rights (OCR) has issued a final rule to advance equity and bolster protections for people with disabilities. The final rule, Discrimination on the Basis of Disability in Health and Human Service Programs or Activities, updates, modernizes, clarifies, and strengthens the implementing regulation for Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. Section 504 prohibits discrimination on the basis of disability in programs

and activities that receive Federal financial assistance.

The historic rule provides robust civil rights protections for people with disabilities in federally funded health and human services programs, such as hospitals, health care providers participating in CHIP and Medicaid programs, state and local human or social service agencies, and nursing homes. Reflecting over 50 years of advocacy by the disability community, it advances the promise of the Rehabilitation Act and helps to ensure that people with disabilities are not subjected to discrimination in any program or activity receiving funding from HHS.

[View more details from the Department of Health and Human Services](#)

### **National Quarterly Data Released for ABLE Accounts**

In 2014, Congress passed the Achieving a Better Life Experience (ABLE) Act, creating a savings, investment, and spending account specifically for people with disabilities. ABLE accounts allow people with disabilities to save money that is not counted towards asset limitations set by means-tested benefit programs such as SSI or Medicaid.

The latest quarterly ABLE account data was released by the National Association of State Treasurers. As of the end of June 2024, there are 171,455 ABLE accounts in the United States. These accounts

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consist of \$1.92 billion total assets. The average account balance is \$11,190.

[Get more national data here](#)

## More States Failing To Meet Special Education Requirements

“States are increasingly struggling to meet their obligations under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, with federal officials labeling a growing number of states as deficient multiple years in a row.

The U.S. Department of Education says that the performance of only 20 states “meets requirements” for serving students with disabilities ages 3 to 21 under federal special education law. The agency deemed all other states as “needs assistance,” with most having earned that label for at least two years in a row.”

[Read the full article here](#)

## Supreme Court Ruling May Upend Disability Rights Protections

“Countless federal regulations ensuring the rights of people with disabilities to everything from health care to community living could face legal challenges after the U.S. Supreme Court overturned a 40-year-old precedent.

In a ruling issued late last month, the high court said that courts should no longer defer to the interpretation of federal

agencies in situations where laws are ambiguous.”

[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.

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**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. Laid on the table April 17, 2024.

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 1573.** Introduced by Representative Joe Ciresi (D-Montgomery). This bill would create a two-year pilot program administered by the Department of Community

and Economic Development (DCED) to help renovate and redevelop historic and older buildings across the Commonwealth. Additionally, these grants may be used to make improvements to entryways and other building features to **make buildings more accessible** for people with disabilities. Referred to Local Government, July 18, 2023. Referred to Senate Community, Economic and Recreational Development, April 22, 2024.

Impact: Would make renovated historic and older buildings more accessible.

**HB 1593.** Introduced by Representative Danielle Otten (D-Chester). This bill would expand access to **Early Intervention** services for 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. Referred to Senate Aging and Youth, April 22, 2024.

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

**HB 1834.** Introduced by Representative Dan L. Miller (D-Allegheny). This bill would create an office of the Executive Director within the Commission who would then serve as the executive officer of the **Employment First** Oversight Commission. Referred to Labor and Industry Nov. 8, 2023. Third consideration and

final passage, April 10, 2024. Referred to Senate Labor and Industry, April 22, 2024.

Impact: Would create the position of Executive Director of the Employment First Oversight Commission.

**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 PDE to fund the Disability Inclusive Curriculum Pilot Program.

**HB 2064.** Introduced by Representative Joe Hogan (R-Bucks). This bill would equip financial institutions and fiduciaries with the necessary tools for identifying, reporting, and preventing the **financial exploitation** of older adults and care-dependent individuals. Referred to Commerce, Feb. 27, 2024.

Impact: Would make it more difficult to financially exploit older adults and care-dependent individuals.

**HB 2066.** Introduced by Representative Brian Munroe (D-Bucks). This bill would equip financial institutions and fiduciaries with the necessary tools for identifying, reporting, and preventing the **financial exploitation** of older adults and care-dependent individuals. Referred to Commerce, Feb. 27, 2024.

Impact: Would make it more difficult to financially exploit older adults and care-dependent individuals.

**HB 2086.** Introduced by Representative Brian Munroe (D-Bucks). This bill would provide for **youth suicide awareness and prevention** and providing for

violence prevention and social inclusion. Referred to Education, March 6, 2024.

Impact: Would help prevent youth suicide by providing violence prevention and social inclusion.

**HB 2113.** Introduced by Representative Tim Twardzik (R-Schuylkill). This bill would address the Pennsylvania's **Long-Term Care Workforce Crisis**. The first bill addresses the Pennsylvania Nurse Aide Training Program in order to enhance the availability of training courses across the state. This legislation will also allow student nurses and graduate nurses to immediately take the Certified Nurse Aide (CNA) exam upon completion of relevant coursework within their nursing program. Referred to Professional Licensure, March 14, 2024.

Impact: This bill would increase the availability of training courses across the state for Certified Nurse Aids (CNA).

**HB 2114.** Introduced by Representative Tim Twardzik (R-Schuylkill). This bill would address Pennsylvania's **Long-Term Care Workforce Crisis**. The second bill provides skills competency examination opportunities to individuals seeking employment as a direct caregiver in lieu of successfully obtaining a high school diploma or GED equivalency. Referred to Education, March 14, 2024.

Impact: Would provide skills competency opportunities for those seeking

employment as a direct caregiver.

**HB 2115.** Introduced by Representative Tim Twardzik (R-Schuylkill). This bill would address the Pennsylvania's **Long-Term Care Workforce Crisis**. The third bill would allow high school juniors and seniors to earn up to two credits toward their graduation requirement for employment in a congregate health care setting (nursing facility, personal care home, assisted living residence, or hospital). Referred to Education, March 14, 2024.

Impact: This bill would allow high school students to earn two credits toward graduation for employment in a health care setting.

**HB 2124.** Introduced by Representative Dane Watro (R-Schuylkill). This bill would allow the parents or guardians of children who have reached the compulsory school age of six (6) years of age to request a waiver from the Department of Education to **delay compulsory education** for one (1) year if the child has been diagnosed with autism or other developmental and intellectual disabilities. Referred to Education, March 18, 2024.

Impact: This would allow parents or guardians to delay the start of school for one year if the child has been diagnosed with a developmental disability.

**HB 2126.** Introduced by Representative Jessica Benham (D-Allegheny). This bill would establish a **Purple Alert system**

in Pennsylvania to help authorities notify the public and assist in locating a missing individual with an **intellectual disability**. Referred to Human Services, March 18, 2024.

Impact: The bill would create an alert system to notify the public about a missing person with an intellectual disability.

**HB 2173.** Introduced by Representative Jessica Benham (D-Allegheny). This bill would consolidate several existing programs under a new **Department of Disability Rights, Employment, Accessibility, and Mobility (DREAM)** and create a secretary position to serve on the governor's cabinet. A similar elevation has proven effective in Maryland, where their Secretary of Disabilities has helped the governor craft much-needed policies that consider people with disabilities at every step. Referred to State Government, April 3, 2024.

Impact: Would create a Department of Disability Rights, Employment, Accessibility and Mobility (DREAM).

**HB 2307.** Introduced by Representative George Dunbar (R-Westmoreland). This bill would clarify the application of budget implementation language for the Chartered Schools for the **Deaf and Blind**. Referred to Appropriations, May 20, 2024.

**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 597.** Introduced by Senator Daniel Laughlin (R-Erie). This bill would modernize public **transportation** and better facilitate capital funding for transit providers in the Commonwealth. Referred to Transportation, April 17, 2023. Final passage December 12, 2023. Referred to House Transportation, December 12, 2023.

Impact: This bill would modernize public transit.

**SB 654.** Introduced by Senator Camera Bartolotta (R-Beaver). This bill would establish the **Public Transportation Trust Fund**. Referred to Finance, May 2, 2023. Third consideration and final passage, Sept. 19, 2023. Referred to House Finance, Sept. 21, 2023. Referred to Third consideration and final passage, March 20, 2024 (106-95). Referred to Senate Rules and Executive Nominations, April 8, 2024.

Impact: This bill would create a Public Transportation Trust Fund.

**SB 764.** Introduced by Senator Steven J. Santarsiero (D-Bucks). This bill introduces the SAVE Students Act. In this training, school personnel will also learn how to identify the signs and signals of depression, suicide and self-injury in students, and when and how to refer youth and their families to appropriate **mental health services** for assessment

within the school entity and the community. Referred to Education, June 6, 2023.

Impact: This bill would create training for school personnel to learn to identify the signs of depression, suicide and self-injury in students.

**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 1001.** Introduced by Senator Scott Martin (R-Lancaster). An Act to provide appropriations from the General Fund for the **expenses for the fiscal year** July 1, 2024, to June 30, 2025. Referred to Appropriations, March 24, 2024.

Impact: This is the appropriations bill for the 2024-2025 fiscal year.

**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.

**SB 1079.** Introduced by Senator Wayne D. Fontana (D-Allegheny). This bill would establish a **Purple Alert system** in Pennsylvania to help authorities notify the public and assist in locating a missing individual with an **intellectual disability**. Referred to Law and Justice, Feb. 26, 2024.

Impact: Would create a system to alert the public to a missing person that has an intellectual disability.

**SB 1168.** Introduced by Senator Vincent J. Hughes (D-Montgomery). This bill would recapitalize the **Housing Options Program** (HOP) with \$100 million each fiscal year for the next five years beginning with the 2024-2025 fiscal year. Referred to Urban Affairs and Housing, April 22, 2024.

Impact: Would recapitalize the Housing Options Program with \$500 million over the next five years.

## Resolutions

**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.

**HR 379.** Introduced by Representative Ann Flood (R-Northampton). A Resolution designating the month of July 2024 as "**Disability Pride Month**" in Pennsylvania. Referred to Human Services, April 9, 2024.

Impact: Designates July 2024 as "Disability Pride Month."

## 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](mailto: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](mailto: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](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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