

The Arc of New Jersey Family Institute



For the families of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities



**For Immediate Action
Time Sensitive**

Action Alert

For Information Only

Harmful Health Care Bill is Coming Back – Call Congress Now!

Take Action:

We MUST stop Congress from moving forward with this harmful bill once and for all. Call your Senators and Representatives now and ask your friends and family to call.

Every single call matters. Don't let them take away health care and services for millions of people and reduce federal support.

What to Say:

- I am a member of The Arc.
- I am a person with I/DD, or I am a family member of someone with I/DD, or I am a professional in the disability field.
- Do NOT support the American Health Care Act, the bill to repeal the Affordable Care Act (ACA).
- Do NOT allow cuts to critical Medicaid services to pay for tax cuts.
- Do NOT allow states to opt out of requiring health plans to cover basic health care and keep it affordable for people with pre-existing conditions.

**CLICK HERE
to Take Action!**

By inputting your address, this web site will identify and provide phone numbers for your Representative in Congress and your two Senators.

The harmful health care bill, called the American Health Care Act (AHCA) is back on the table and could move quickly. Members of the House of Representatives and the Trump Administration continue negotiations on the bill.

This bill is very dangerous to people with disabilities and their families. It repeals major provisions of the Affordable Care Act, and many of its critical protections, and cuts \$880 billion out of the Medicaid program - and uses it to help pay for tax cuts for the wealthy and corporations.

Major components of the bill include:

- A decimated Medicaid program: The federal government would no longer share in the costs of providing health care services and community living supports beyond the capped amount, a proposal known as per capita caps. It weakens Medicaid by ending the Medicaid expansion earlier, offering Medicaid block grants to states, and promoting work requirements.
- Loss of essential health benefits: States may have the option to waive important consumer protections in the Affordable Care Act. For example, states could choose to ignore the essential health benefits requirement which ensures that health plans cover basic needs such as prescription drugs, mental health services, and rehabilitative and habilitative services and devices, that have been critically important to people with disabilities and chronic health conditions.
- No more protections for pre-existing conditions: Another dangerous change being discussed is letting states waive the requirement for community rating. This would allow the insurance companies to charge people with pre-existing conditions whatever they wanted, essentially making the pre-existing condition protections meaningless. The combination of these changes would make it nearly impossible for people with pre-existing conditions to find affordable plans that cover basic health care services.

Your Advocacy Tool Belt

We know that calling your representatives may feel overwhelming. We want to help you feel more comfortable and confident in your advocacy role. Below are some resources to help. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact us fap@arcnj.org.



Commonly Used Legislative Lingo

Appropriation: The money allocated if a bill becomes law.

Bill: A proposal to establish a new law, or to change, clarify or repeal an existing law.

Bipartisanship: Agreement or cooperation of between political parties

Budget: The amount of money that is available for, required for, or assigned to a particular purpose.

Congressional Districts: One of 13 districts in New Jersey from which a representative is elected. The districts are established by state law and are redrawn following a census to maintain an even population in each district.

Constituents: A resident of a legislator's district.

Fiscal Year (FY): An accounting period of 12 months. In New Jersey State government, it's period runs from July 1 to June 30. The federal government's fiscal year is the period of October 1 to September 30.

Floor: The area of the legislative chamber occupied by the members and staff of the house. A legislator "has the floor" when he or she has been granted permission by the presiding officer to address the house.

Legislative District: One of the forty areas in New Jersey from which one senator and two General Assembly members are elected. Districts, many of which cross county lines, are established by a special Apportionment Commission and are equal in population.

Legislative Information and Bill Room (LIBR): A unit under the Director of Public Information of the Office of Legislative Services that supports a variety of information about the Legislature to legislators and the public.



Build a Relationship with Your Legislators

You are an expert! Every day you deal with issues as a family member of someone with an intellectual or developmental disability. Your representatives need to learn from you about what the issues are and how government can help. The key to having your voice heard is to build a relationship with your representatives.

1. **Know your legislators and their staff.**
 - If you haven't met them, set up a meeting or write a letter to introduce yourself. This is especially important if the legislator is newly elected and may not know the issue. Legislative schedules can be tricky, so be patient when trying to make an appointment.
2. **The information you provide your legislators should be understandable, accurate, and persuasive.**
 - Giving personal stories about your family's experiences related to the issue is a good way to put a human face to a problem, when talking about services or programs that your audience needs the most.
3. **Don't be afraid to ask how they intend to vote on specific issues and why.**
 - If they do not intend to vote your way, continue to build your relationship and share information that may sway their opinion.
 - When legislators do support your position, give them credit. Send them letters or thank you notes and share them with the editor of your local newspaper, comment on their support publicly. You would hate for them to feel unappreciated the next time you ask for their help.
4. **Work with a legislator's staff.**
 - Staff members contact research, draft bills, make recommendations on amendments and develop agendas in areas in which their legislators cannot devote the time.
5. **Attend town council meetings, school board meetings, rallies, and other forums that are open to the public.**
 - This will give you the opportunity to meet key people involved in the issue, keep up to date on developments in need of the issue, and voice your opinion.

TIPS FOR RESPONDING TO ACTION ALERTS When Calling Your Legislators

Have this information in front of you when you call so that you can access it if needed.

State that you are a constituent and calling about an issue or a Bill that is up for vote.
 • Do not worry if you do not get to speak to the legislator directly, it is common for staff to answer calls.
Use People First Language when discussing your loved one.
 • Ex: My sister Samantha has a developmental disability, NOT My developmentally disabled sister Samantha.
Make sure to give them your contact information so they can get back to you with information or to ask you follow up questions.
Clearly state what the issue is and what you are asking for. Try to stick to one key issue.
Keep your message short and simple.



State why the issue matters to you and how it will affect your family.
 • Ex: "My son has a developmental disability and this will directly affect our family's life. If more community based housing is not created, my son will have nowhere to go if something were to happen to my husband and I."
If you do not know the answer to a question, be honest. Let them know you will get back to them. Make sure to follow-up later with the answer.
Ask for a commitment
 • Ex: "Can I count on the Senator to vote yes/no on this issue?"
Always be polite and thank them for listening to your concerns.

Tips for responding to action alerts when calling

Commonly Used Legislative Lingo

How to Build a Relationship with your Legislators

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