

The Arc of New Jersey Family Institute



For the families of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities



Please note: The below action alert has been updated. We would like to clarify that we are not asking for families to call both days, only one day. Also, the link to download a hard copy of this action alert has been changed. We apologize for any inconvenience and confusion this may have caused.

Protect the Lifeline: Act Now to Preserve Health Care for People with Disabilities and Seniors

For Immediate Action
Time Sensitive

Action Alert

For Information Only

Action Needed:

We urge you to call your Senators and House members on Tuesday, January 31 or Wednesday, February 1 to protect the Affordable Care Act (ACA also known as, Obamacare), Medicaid and Medicare.

The call-in number is 866-426-2631

When you call, you will hear a brief overview of the issues and will be asked to enter your zip code before being transferred to your members of Congress.

Talking Points:

1. State your name and that you are a constituent of the Senator or House member and briefly how you are related to someone with a disability.
2. **No repeal of the ACA without simultaneous replacement**
If Congress votes to repeal the ACA, a replacement package that provides equivalent

or improved access to affordable, quality health coverage must be included in the same legislation.

3. No cuts to and restructuring of Medicaid

Seniors and people with disabilities rely on the Medicaid program. It is the primary public source of funding for long-term services and supports. Program cuts, along with block grant or per capita cap proposals would hurt people who have no alternative means of paying for essential services.

4. Preserve Medicare for current and future seniors and people with disabilities

Medicare is a huge success story, with strong support from all Americans. Premium support and other restructuring proposals to shift more costs onto beneficiaries would make health care far less affordable and accessible to seniors and people with disabilities.



Background

The President and Congress are moving quickly to dismantle the Affordable Care Act (ACA also known as, Obamacare), and major cuts to and restructuring of Medicaid and Medicare may not be far behind. We must let policymakers know that these changes will hurt seniors and people with disabilities. In partnership with the Consortium for Citizens with Disabilities and the Leadership Council of Aging Organizations (LCAO), The Arc of New Jersey urges you, your family and friends to participate in the call-in days.

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.
Constituent: A resident of a legislator's district.
Fiscal Year (FY): An accounting period of 12 months. In New Jersey State government, the period runs from July 1 to June 30. The Federal government's fiscal year is the period of October 1 to September 30.
House: 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 supplies 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 what government can help. The key to having your voice heard is to build a relationship with your representative.

- 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 issues. 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.**
 - Sharing personal stories about your family's experiences related to the issue is a good way to put a human face on a problem, when talking about services or programs don't assume your audience knows the lingo.
- 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 of thanks, 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 asked for their help.
- 4. Work with a legislator's staff.**
 - Staff members contact research, draft bills, make recommendations on amendments and develop expertise in areas in which their legislator 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 related to 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.

- ie. 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.

- "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

- ie. "Can I count on the Senator to vote yea/no on this issue?"

Always be polite and thank them for listening to your concerns.

Tips for responding to action alerts when calling

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