The Arc of Michigan 2021
Update from Washington

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My Story...
COVID-19 Took All the Attention in 2020
COVID-19 & People with Disabilities

• January 31, 2020 – U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Secretary issues public health emergency declaration

• March 11 – World Health Organization declares COVID-19 a pandemic

• March 13 – U.S. President issues national emergency declaration

• People with disabilities and/or who are immunocompromised are at particular risk, facing high risk of complications and needing to isolate themselves for protection
Priority Issues

- **Dedicated funding for Medicaid HCBS** to support access to home and community-based services to limit the risk of people with disabilities being put into institutions and support the workforce. Congress should pass the Coronavirus Relief for Seniors and People with Disabilities Act.

- **Personal protective equipment (PPE)** for direct support professionals. This is urgently needed to protect the health and safety of this critical workforce. Direct support professionals must be designated as essential workers so that they can get access to the PPE and medical supplies they need.

- **Paid leave for caregivers.** As more people with disabilities lose their usual sources of care, family caregivers are scrambling and need access to paid leave and sick days to help their loved ones. Congress should include all family caregivers in the emergency paid leave provisions.

- **Economic impact payments for all people with disabilities.** Tell Congress to ensure that there are no barriers for access to stimulus payments, include adult dependents.
Policy Update:
117th Congress
American Rescue Plan
Where We Are

The American Rescue Plan (passed March 11, 2021)
- 10% FMAP Bump for Medicaid HCBS
- Inclusion of DSP workforce as essential
- Stimulus Checks (including adult dependents)
- Additional funding for SNAP, Housing
- Continuation of the eviction moratorium
- Continuation and expansion of paid leave tax credits
- Improvements to Earned Income Tax Credit and Child Tax Credit
Where We Are for NOW

The American Rescue Plan (passed March 11, 2021)

- **10% FMAP Bump** for Medicaid HCBS
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March 31, 2021: President Biden announces the American Jobs Plan
• $400 billion investment in HCBS

April 28, 2021: President Biden announces the American Family Plan
• $225 billion investment in paid leave
• $225 billion investment in child care
• Continue expansion of the Earned Income Tax Credit and Child Tax Credit through 2025
Medicaid and HCBS

• Momentum and Focus on HCBS
• Part of the American Jobs Plan
• Public Interest and Focus
• Polling

WHY THIS MATTERS?
Better Care Better Jobs
• Medicaid HCBS Solutions
• Waiting List Issues
• Workforce Issues
• Marriage Penalty
• Income Asset Limits
• Housing
• IDEA
• Health Care..... The list goes on
What Exactly is Medicaid?
Medicaid 101- It’s Complicated

PROTECT MEDICAID!

Achieve with us.
Why Medicaid Matters Nationally

• One in five people rely on Medicaid for health care (74.6 million people in June 2020!)

• Over **11 million people with disabilities** rely on it for health care services and to live independently.

• It is MUCH more than a health care program, Medicaid is the main funder for LONG-TERM SERVICES AND SUPPORTS (LTSS) including HOME AND COMMUNITY BASED SERVICES (HCBS).

• People with disabilities and senior citizens account for about 48% of the total Medicaid budget and about 21% of the beneficiaries because of their use of those LTSS.
WHAT ARE HCBS?

In the Home
- Help cooking
- Help with medications
- Assistance with self care
- Budgeting
- Socializing

On the Job and in the community
- Job coaching
- Community volunteering
- Day programs

(What our chapters do!)
State and Federal Partnership

Because Medicaid is a Federal-State Partnership, the Federal Government makes a basic set of rules and states can decide what else they want to cover as part of Medicaid. This creates some Mandatory services (required by the Feds) and some Optional services (the state has chosen to cover these):

Mandatory Services
• Most “traditional” health care services
• Prescription drugs
• Nursing Home Services and other Institutional Services*
• Match guaranteed to states (thanks to advocacy in 2017)

Optional Services
• HOME AND COMMUNITY BASED SERVICES
When people talk about “Social Security” they may be talking about two different programs. The first program is Social Security, also called Title II. The second program is Supplemental Security Income (SSI). Both programs provide income support or cash assistance to people with disabilities and both provide health care.
Social Security and SSI

What did President Biden propose regarding Social Security and SSI?

• Increase SSI benefits to 100% Federal Poverty Level
• Eliminate asset limits
• Eliminate marriage penalties
• Eliminate “in-kind support and maintenance” rules
• Eliminate waiting periods for Social Security
• Eliminate the benefit cliff for Social Security
• Support the ABLE Age Adjustment Act
Social Security and SSI

What is Budget Reconciliation and why should you care?

• Reconciliation is a set of special Senate budget rules
• Reconciliation means you only need 50 votes to pass legislation
• However, one of the budget rules says that Social Security cannot be changed via reconciliation
• TL:DR, we would need 60 votes for a Social Security bill. We only need 50 votes for a SSI bill.
Social Security and SSI

Bicameral Letter (Rep. Bowman etc.)
- The Biden proposals:
  - Increase benefits
  - Eliminate asset limits, food and shelter rules, and marriage penalties
  - Implicated by the Biden plan, increase income disregards

- All of the above, except for benefits increase

The ASSET Act (Sen. Coons and Rep. Gomez)
- Increases asset limit in SSI, eliminates for SNAP
Other priorities:

- Increasing the Substantial Gainful Activity (SGA) level

- The Stop the Wait Act, which would eliminate the waiting periods for Social Security Disability benefits and Medicare

- Wonky issues related to some Social Security benefits

- Pandemic issues: stimulus checks, field office closures, unemployment insurance
Social Security and SSI Policy Issues

  - SGA
  - Income disregards
  - Asset limits

- SSI Restoration Act
  - Income disregards
  - Asset limits

- Transition to Independence Act
  - Medicaid
Recovery Priorities:

• A $400 billion investment to fund expanded access to Medicaid HCBS to people with disabilities on waiting lists, and address the direct care workforce crisis, including raising wages. This effort will also allow unpaid family caregivers who have been filing in the gaps of service for far too long to re-enter the workforce.

• A national paid leave program. The pandemic forced millions of people to choose between their own health, the health of their families, and their livelihood. We must invest in our care infrastructure and pass a national paid leave program that guarantees paid leave to family caregivers.

• Improvements to Supplemental Security Income program. The lowest income people with disabilities who rely on SSI receive extremely limited benefits and cannot have more than $2,000 in savings, an amount that has not been updated since 1984. SSI benefits, asset limits, and other program rules must be updated to lift people with disabilities out of poverty.
Long-Term Advocacy
The HCBS Access Act (HAA) would address the long-standing issue of limited access to HCBS, staffing shortages, low wages for DSPs, waiting lists, and the issues that have been highlighted in COVID.
HAA is the next step in the history of The Arc.

The HCBS Access Act (HAA) would:
• Make HCBS services MANDATORY Medicaid services
• Provide funding to build capacity and ELIMINATE waiting lists
• Increase funding for DSP wages
• Make Medicaid portable across state lines

It would also fulfill one of the ORIGINAL PURPOSES of our organization and ensure that people with disabilities can have lives in the community!
COMMUNITY MATTERS!
Share your story.

Achieve with us.
Thank you

contact us:

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LET'S STAY IN TOUCH!

A RECORDING OF TODAY'S PRESENTATION WILL BE UPLOADED TO OUR WEBSITE AT WWW.ARCMI.ORG

THANK YOU FOR JOINING US THIS MONTH, WE HOPE YOU ENJOYED THIS WEBINAR SERIES. BE SURE TO WATCH YOUR EMAIL FOR A FOLLOW-UP SURVEY.

NEXT YEAR WE HOPE TO SEE YOU IN LANSING ON JUNE 24, 2022!

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