

Dear Policy Watchers,

Big news today. The Autism CARES Act [passed the Senate!](#) That means it is cleared to go to the President's desk for signature. This legislation authorizes the federal government to spend \$369 million on autism research and programs each year through 2024. That funding includes the [LEND programs](#), which makes this an especially great week for our DD Act partners at UCEDDs around the country. Congratulations to all the advocates who placed calls, wrote letters and emails and met with their members of congress to make this happen!

In other news:

DD Council Appropriations Headed for A Continuing Resolution. The House of Representatives [passed a Continuing Resolution](#) (CR) by a vote of 301-123 to avert a government shutdown. This legislative maneuvering maintains current spending rates and conditions until November 21. The Senate will vote and probably pass this CR next week. Members will be focused on resolving funding issues around the border wall construction, detention beds, immigration agents, and women's health care.

Direct CARE Opportunity Act Goes Live. Currently, the professional home health care workforce is unprepared to meet the emerging gaps created by aging "baby boomers" and an aging family caregiver network. The [Direct Creation, Advancement, and Retention of Employment \(CARE\) Opportunity Act](#), introduced this week by Rep. Bobby Scott and endorsed by NACDD, addresses the direct care workforce crisis by investing in promising strategies to recruit, retain and advance the direct care workforce pipeline. It incentivizes state, regional and local innovation to attract direct care workers such as training, career pathways, or mentoring. This legislation provides an immediate and concentrated effort to increase the direct service provider workforce so that older adults and people with disabilities can have the same freedom and liberty as everyone else.

Time to "Stop the Wait" for SSDI benefits. Also introduced this week was the [Stop the Wait Act](#), which eliminates the long, arbitrary waiting periods for people who have recently qualified for SSDI benefits. This bipartisan legislation was introduced by [Rep. Lloyd Doggett](#) (D-TX), Chair of the House Ways and Means Health Subcommittee and House Budget Committee Member, [Sen. Bob Casey](#) (D-PA), Ranking Member of the Senate Special Committee on Aging, and [Rep. Brian Fitzpatrick](#) (R-PA), Member of the House Committees on Foreign Affairs as well as Transportation and Infrastructure. With the current waiting periods, people who qualify for SSDI go two years (!) without any health coverage until Medicare kicks in. A change is long overdue.

(ACTION ALERT) To Twitter! We've been hearing rumblings about gun violence and mental health this week. Apparently, Senator McConnell has been meeting with the administration about possible legislation. While the details are murky, civil rights groups are worried that this legislation could

- A) ...possibly involve the registration of people with mental health disabilities, and
- B) ...be introduced directly on the Senate floor and skip the committee debate.

Until we know more, all of the national groups following this issue are urging disability advocates tweet at their Senators in order to educate them that [mental health disabilities are not linked to gun violence](#).

REMINDER: While the DD Council cannot lobby their senators to vote for/against specific bills, we can still educate them about potential effects of this type of legislation. And anyone can urge their senators to action if speaking in your personal capacity (for example self-advocates using their own social media accounts).

Two Wins for Education. It was a doubly great week on the education front as two of our ongoing efforts produced positive results.

First up, the Department of Justice decided to dismiss [the appeal](#) of Secretary Betsy DeVos and the Department of Education in the case involving the [Equity in IDEA regulation](#) (2016). This regulation was enacted in the Obama years to gather data about children of color. Former Education Secretary John B. King Jr.:

"Children of color with disabilities are overrepresented within the special education population, and the contrast in how frequently they are disciplined is even starker."

When the current administration tried to delay this regulation, the Council of Parent Attorneys and Advocates (COPAA) sued, won the suit, and forced the data collection to begin. Now that the appeal has been dismissed, it looks like this regulation is here to stay.

This news was followed by the release of a new "higher ed" [guidance document](#) about funding in the final year of IDEA eligibility. NACDD signed on to [a letter requesting this guidance](#) in 2018, as did the Georgia and Tennessee Councils, and, on first read, it looks like the guidance is good news for people who are going to enroll in postsecondary programs.

But Wait There's More. We've got some new education resources for you as well. The National Council for Learning Disabilities (NCLD) just released three reports on meeting the needs of students with learning disabilities (SLD). Check them out to learn about SLD eligibility rules and what's happening across the country.

- [NCLD White paper: Evaluation for Specific Learning Disabilities: Allowable Methods of Identification & Their Implications](#)
- [NCLD White paper: What a Specific Learning Disability Is Not: Examining Exclusionary Factors](#)
- [NCLD White paper: Data-Based Problem Solving: Effective Implementation of MTSS, RTI, and PBIS](#)

Defending Our Rights in Federal Courts. Don't forget about the NACDD's upcoming Quarterly Policy Call on Monday, October 7th at 2:00 pm EST. Friend of NACDD [Alison Barkoff](#) will be stopping by to talk about a pair of amicus briefs that NACDD has joined in the past year regarding the [ACA](#) and [immigration](#). All are welcome to join and listen. The call-in number is 800-832-0736 (Passcode: 6261788).

That's all for this week—enjoy your weekend!

Questions? Comments? Concerns? You can always reach me at eprangle@nacdd.org.