

Celebrating All Abilities Virginia



SPRING/SUMMER 2021

It was 20 years ago today....

Well.... Maybe not exactly today . . . But I'll never forget the day in early 2001 that the Editor of New Town Publication's Virginia Parent News (VPN), walked into my office – I was the sales manager and a writer for VPN – and told me about a woman who had contacted her with an intriguing idea for an add-on publication to VPN.

The woman was Fran Nickey, a writer/editor from Maryland who had been instrumental in creating *A Special Edition*, a publication of Baltimore's Child and funded by the Maryland Department of Education. *A Special Edition* was designed to furnish information for and about children with special needs, their families and the professionals who care for them. She wanted to create a similar project in Virginia and was in the process of obtaining funding from the Virginia Board for People with Disabilities (VBPD).

Fran did obtain that funding, an innovative grant from the VBPD; innovative because information for this population had never been put together in quite this way and distributed at no cost to the reader.

So we went to work, writing articles, researching

resources, and seeking distribution points for our new publication, which we had named *Celebrating Special Children*.

And did we have our work cut out for us! It was one of my jobs to verify some of the resources, using piles of pieced together paper files that Fran had brought with her from Maryland. Remember it was 2001 and I was working on my iMAC G3, using my excruciatingly slow dial-up internet connection.



At this point, I want to remember our gratitude to the staff of the Parent Educational Advocacy Training Center (www.PEATC.org) who provided invaluable support in the form of writers, tech people and lists of resource materials. It was like being pregnant and giving birth, months of preparation, with PEATC and the VBPD as the midwives, and culminating in our new baby, *Celebrating Special Children*.

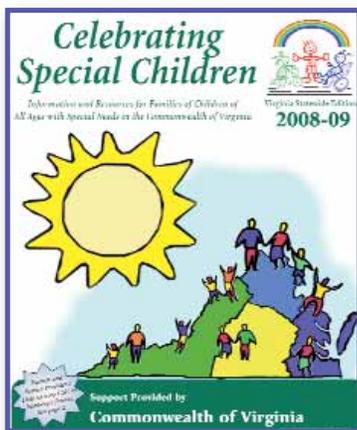
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We printed 50,000 copies with distribution limited to Northern Virginia. The publication was so well received that in 2003 the VBPD provided an additional grant to expand distribution throughout the state. In order to better serve the needs of our targeted population, Celebrating Special Children, Inc. was formed in 2003 and received 501(c)(3) nonprofit status in 2004. After several years of creating regional guides, in 2008/09, a single statewide publication was created and distributed to hundreds of locations, including the Special Education departments and Parent Resource Centers of



all counties and incorporated cities in Virginia.

Fast forward to 2009 and the global financial crisis. In the midst of creating a new Celebrating Special Children website, we simply ran out of money.

What happened next?

Our former Chairman of the Board, Ken Plum, Reston delegate to the Virginia Assembly, arranged for Celebrating Special Children to be added to a list of charities that could receive donations as part of the taxpayer's Virginia state tax return. We did receive monies from these returns and for a time, had a bit of funding to review and update the website and create an online newsletter. However, we didn't have enough funding to create a new hard copy guide.

What else changed? One important change was the name of the newsletter. Over time our audience had expanded to include all ages and so it seemed necessary to have a new name that reflected our new focus. We want to keep the idea of a celebration; we want to continue the concept of making connections; and most importantly, we want to focus on the idea that having a disability does not mean having an impediment to living a full and complete life. Hence was developed *DisAbilities Celebration Connection*.

But after a time, even that title seemed incomplete. So we changed again, in 2015, to *All-Abilities Celebration Connection*. And that name stuck until we disbanded the board of directors and closed down the nonprofit in 2018.

I spent a year thinking about what to do next. In the intervening years, broadband and high-speed internet had become more accessible, certainly not perfect... but better.

I also spent a lot of time thinking about ways to give new life to the work of Celebrating Special Children. Hence in 2019, *Celebrating All Abilities* became the new name on the Facebook page and I designed a new logo image. The next step was to create a new website with the new name. So I bought the domain address and taught myself – with invaluable help from my son, Conor – to use Wordpress to populate the site with the information I had saved from the previous site. And I set about to write and post newsletters that could be disseminated. Most importantly, I was not looking to make the site into an income-producing business. That is to say, I didn't ask for money– in the form of advertising, sponsorships, donations, or anything else. *Celebrating All Abilities* was just me, my computer and our community of folks who care for and about people of all abilities.

And now finally, I'm moving on to what may be the most challenging phase. In this past year of the pandemic, with most people at home and the increased sophistication of online forums and websites, I am coming to see myself as a tech dinosaur; basically an old fashioned paper copy editor, with my rapidly aging Mini Mac and equally aging design programs that I can't afford to replace.

I am hoping to be able to figure out how to navigate and be comfortable in the ever more rapidly increasing digital world. We'll see. . .

However, whatever happens with my technical education regarding the quarterly newsletter, I will keep the facebook page and continue to update the Community Resources. Maybe, I'll even learn how to blog correctly!

Thank you as always for taking the Journey with me. Stay safe and see you in the Fall!





~ FOUND ON FACEBOOK ~



All Wheelchair Stuff

We want to create a better life for wheelchair users. We do this by raises the daily challenges of disabled people

in a critical but humorous way, with the aim of creating more awareness.

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See these and other videos at www.facebook.com/AllWheelChairStuff

The Best Buddies Friendship Walk ~ Virtual Event ~ May 1, 2021



For sponsorship opportunities and other event inquiries, please contact: joannahatch@bestbuddies.org.

REGISTER at www.bestbuddiesfriendshipwalk.org/vadc/register/

DONATE at www.bestbuddiesfriendshipwalk.org/vadc/donate/

Saturday, May 1st, 2021 • 11:00 AM
Virtual Event • www.facebook.com/bestbuddiesvadc/

The Best Buddies Friendship Walk is the leading walk in the country supporting inclusion for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (also known as IDD).

Join 40,000 walkers across the country to support the Best Buddies programs in your schools, workplaces and communities. You'll be making the world more welcoming to people with intellectual and developmental disabilities – one friendship, one job, and one life-changing connection at a time.

<https://www.bestbuddiesfriendshipwalk.org>



Look for the next issue of Celebrating All Abilities to be posted during the Summer/Fall of 2021.

Send story ideas, interesting links, and events to

Laura Nelson, Editor at

CelebratingAllAbilities@gmail.com

THANK YOU FOR FOLLOWING US ON FACEBOOK



Editor's Note:

These are but a very few of the many bills relating to the disability community taken up in the past legislative session by the Virginia Assembly. As of March 2021, these bills have passed, some with approved amendments. Where indicated, The Governor has signed. For complete updated information, visit <https://lis.virginia.gov/>

House Bill 1805 and Senate Bill 1366

Aging Services; Economic And Social Need

Introduced by: George L. Barker

Summary As Passed Senate:

Requires the Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services, in providing aging services, to use available resources to provide services to older persons with the greatest economic or social needs. The bill defines "economic need" as need resulting from an income level at or below the poverty line. The bill defines "social need" as need caused by noneconomic factors, including (i) physical and mental disabilities, which include developmental disabilities and human immunodeficiency virus; (ii) language barriers; and (iii) cultural, social, or geographic isolation, including that which is related to a history of discrimination for factors such as racial or ethnic status, gender identity, gender expression, or sexual orientation that can affect an individual's ability to perform normal daily tasks or threatens such individual's capacity to live independently.

House Bill 1848

Virginia Human Rights Acts; adds discrimination on the basis of disability.

Introduced by: Mark D. Sickles
~ Governor has Signed ~

Summary As Passed House:

The bill also requires employers, defined

in the bill, to make reasonable accommodation to the known physical and mental impairments of an otherwise qualified person with a disability, if necessary to assist such person in performing a particular job, unless the employer can demonstrate that the accommodation would impose an undue hardship on the employer. The bill also prohibits employers from taking any adverse action against an employee who requests or uses a reasonable accommodation, from denying employment or promotion opportunities to an otherwise qualified applicant or employee because such employer will be required to make reasonable accommodation to the applicant or employee, or from requiring an employee to take leave if another reasonable accommodation can be provided to the known limitations related to the disability.

House Bill 1888

Absentee voting; procedural and process reforms, availability and accessibility reforms, penalty.

Introduced by:
Schuyler T. VanValkenburg

Summary As Passed House:

Makes various reforms to absentee voting processes and procedures, including those related to availability and accessibility. The bill requires certain actions to be taken to process absentee ballots returned before the day of an election, including verifying the correct completion of the voter affirmation statement, and provides

for an opportunity for an absentee voter to make corrections to the statement in certain circumstances. The bill requires the establishment of drop-off locations for the return of voted absentee ballots.

Additionally, a central absentee voter precinct is required to be established in each locality; currently, establishment is optional. On the day of the election, officers of election are required to begin processing absentee ballots in the central absentee voter precincts prior to the close of polls, but no ballot vote counts are permitted to be transmitted outside of the central absentee voter precinct before the close of polls; a violation of such prohibition is a Class 1 misdemeanor. When reporting election results to the Department of Elections, the general registrars are required to report absentee ballots cast early in person separately from all other absentee ballots. Additionally, a voter who has applied for and received an absentee ballot may choose to instead vote at his polling place on election day, and such voter shall be entitled to cast a provisional ballot. The bill requires a ballot marking tool with screen reader assistive technology to be made available for absentee voters with a print disability. Restrictions on the availability of absentee voting for first-time voters who registered by mail are repealed. The bill contains technical amendments for organizational and readability purposes.

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House Bill 2140

Alternative Application For Employment For Persons With A Disability;

Department of Human Resource Management (DHRM) to create a process. Introduced by: Elizabeth R. Guzman |

Summary As Passed House:

Department of Human Resource Management, alternative application for employment for persons with a disability. Directs the Department of Human Resource Management to create an alternative application process for the employment of persons with a disability. The process must be noncompetitive in nature and provide state agencies using the process an option for converting positions filled through the noncompetitive process into positions that are normally filled through a competitive process. The bill directs the Department of Human Resource Management to develop and disseminate a policy to implement the provisions of the bill.

House Bill 2238

Licensed private schools for students with disabilities; accreditation.

Introduced by: Kaye Kory |

Summary As Introduced:

Directs the Board of Education to require, pursuant to regulation, any private school for students with disabilities that is licensed by the Board, as a condition for renewal of its initial license to operate, to

obtain accreditation from an accrediting agency recognized by the Virginia Council for Private Education within three years of the issuance of its initial triennial license by the Board. The bill provides that, notwithstanding the foregoing requirement, any private school for students with disabilities that is licensed to operate by the Board as of July 1, 2021, shall obtain accreditation from an accrediting agency recognized by the Virginia Council for Private Education no later than July 1, 2024.

House Bill 1971

Virginia Fair Housing Law; reasonable accommodations, disability-related requests for parking.

Introduced by: Betsy B. Carr
~ Governor has Signed ~

Summary As Passed House:

Provides that for the purposes of the Virginia Fair Housing Law, when a person receives a request for accessible parking to accommodate a disability, the person receiving the request shall treat such request as a request for reasonable accommodation.

House Bill 2162

Medical care facilities; designated support persons for persons with disabilities.

Introduced by: Kathy K.L. Tran

Summary As Passed House:

Medical care facilities; persons with disabilities; designated support persons. Requires every medical care facility, as defined in the bill, to allow a person with

a disability who requires assistance as a result of such disability to be accompanied by a designated support person who will provide support and assistance necessary due to the specifics of the person's disability to the person with a disability during an admission to such medical care facility. The bill (i) defines "person with a disability" and "designated support person"; (ii) provides that a designated support person shall not be subject to restrictions on visitation adopted by the medical care facility but may be required to comply with reasonable requirements of the medical care facility adopted to protect the health and safety of the person with a disability, the designated support person, and staff and other patients of and visitors to the medical care facility; and (iii) authorizes a medical care facility to restrict a designated support person's access to specified areas and movement on the premises of the medical care facility when such restrictions are determined by the medical care facility to be reasonably necessary to protect the health and safety of the person with a disability, the designated support person, and staff and other patients of and visitors to the medical care facility. The bill requires every medical care facility to adopt protocols to inform patients of their right to be accompanied by a designated support person, and to develop and make available to persons with disabilities written information regarding the right of a person with a disability to be accompanied by a designated support person and policies related thereto. The bill contains an emergency clause and directs the Board of Health to adopt emergency regulations within 280 days of the bill's enactment.



To see the full text of all bills and all sponsors, visit

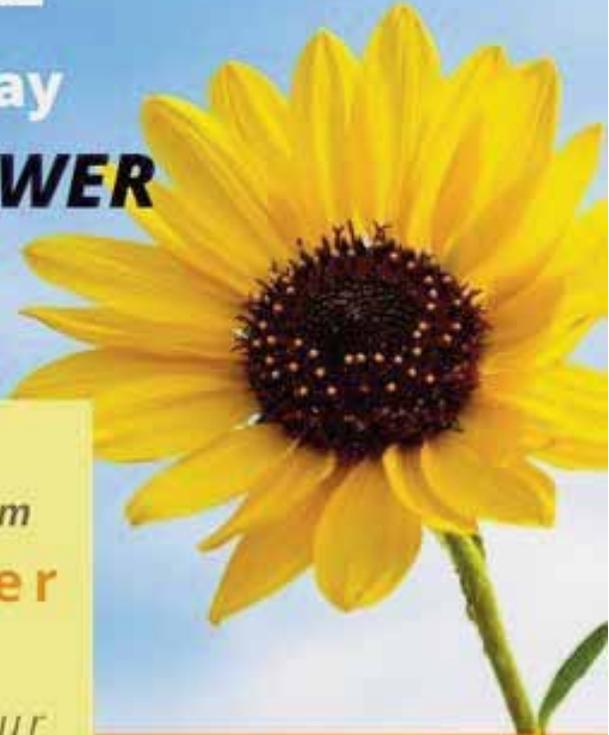
<https://lis.virginia.gov/>

Click on “Bills and Resolutions” and input the House or Senate Bill number in the Search Box i.e., HB19


The Arc@Home
Hosted by The Arc of North Central Virginia

FAMILY CELEBRATION SERIES

Celebrate Earth Day
PAIN*T A *SUNFLOWER
and MORE!



JOIN US!
Sunday, April 25th @3pm
Paint a Sunflower
and MORE!

*Register to receive your
@Home Kit with supplies
for several craft projects
and a FREE GIFT!*

REGISTER HERE:
[https://events.eventzilla.net/e/the-archome-
april-paint-a-sunflower-2138812209](https://events.eventzilla.net/e/the-archome-april-paint-a-sunflower-2138812209)



JOIN US on:
April 25, 2021 | 3 PM
REGISTER for Zoom Link

For more info:
Contact Marilyn @
info@arcofncv.org

SPRING EVENTS



DOWN SYNDROME ASSOCIATION
OF GREATER RICHMOND

For more information, visit <https://dsagr.org>

- Whether you're a parent, an advocate, or an individual with Down Syndrome, you'll find resources, information, and open arms. DSAGR proudly serves Central Virginia, Charlottesville, Williamsburg and the Central Shenandoah Valley.
- DSAGR advocates for awareness and understanding by educating our members and community about DS, and offering education practices to help our members navigate the school years – from IEPs to behavior and everything in between.

DOWN SYNDROME ASSOCIATION
OF GREATER RICHMOND

Spring Games & Social Club "Hang" out with us!

A VIRTUAL bi-monthly event to say hello to friends and play games led by DSAGR. Fun for all ages.

4:00–4:30pm Tuesdays

- March 16th
- March 30
- April 13
- April 27
- May 11
- May 25

The Down Syndrome Association of Greater Richmond

TRIVIA MANIA!

May 10-15 ✨ Facebook Live 8-9:30 PM on May 15
✨ 5 Nights of Qualifying Rounds ✨ Cash & Gift Card Prizes Each Night
✨ Online Auction Held May 1-15 ✨ 1 Championship Round Saturday, May 15

Tickets on sale NOW at
www.dsagr.org

- We believe individuals with Down syndrome are valuable members of our community and in whom all things are possible. With full opportunities and community support, individuals with DS will achieve great things.
- We boast a membership of hundreds of families; a community within our community that celebrates and embraces raising children with DS. We listen, we learn, and we have fun. Together, we help our members every step of the journey.



Child uses Dynavox alternative communication device
Thad Alton / The Capitol-Journal / AP Photo

Students With Limited Verbal Capabilities Can Thrive in Inclusive Classrooms

With the right support, students who cannot rely on natural speech to communicate can do well in integrated classrooms.

By Tim Villegas
March 17, 2021

My first exposure to a student who used augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) was when I taught in a self-contained disability-specific special education classroom. The student, Ringo, had a device like a small laptop that he used to type words and sentences, which were spoken aloud by the device. When Ringo received the device, I didn't get much training other than a few consultations with the speech and language pathologist and a pat on the back for good luck.

After 13 years in the classroom, I realize now what I wish I knew then: Students who cannot rely on speech to be understood don't have to be educated in segregated classrooms. And for educators who have students who require communication supports, training or preparation doesn't have to be complex.

An estimated 1.3 percent of Americans cannot reliably meet their daily communication needs using natural speech. With schools increasingly educating students with disabilities in inclusive classrooms, educators will likely come across people who need or use AAC in their classroom as part of a co-teaching model or with assistance from a paraprofessional.

Here are four ways educators can prepare for students who need AAC.

1. GET FAMILIAR WITH AAC

According to the nonprofit Communication First, AAC is any method of communication used by people with speech or communication disabilities to supplement or take the place of verbal speech. This can include no-tech aids (like pointing, gesturing, or signing), low-tech options (such as a paper board with words, letters, and symbols on it), or high-tech solutions (such as a computer with text-to-speech software).

Some students will use AAC all the time, others only in certain situations. And while some people think that the use of AAC may limit students, using a communication system only empowers people who would not otherwise express themselves reliably.

2. WATCH AAC IN ACTION

There are examples in TV and movies of people using AAC that the disability community has universally panned, but fortunately there are also some authentic portrayals. One of the best ways to learn more about people with disabilities is to hear directly from them or interact with media heavily influenced by their voice. Here are a few movies and short films to get you started.

~ *Listen* (2021): A short film made by and with nonspeaking autistic people.

~ *The Reason I Jump* (2021): A feature-length film based on the biography of Naoki Higashida, who is autistic and nonspeaking.

~ *Loop* (2020): A short film by Pixar and Disney highlights Renee, a nonspeaking autistic girl who makes friends with Marcus, a speaking boy, when the two go canoeing together at camp.

~ *Thasya* (2012): This powerful short film is a profile of Thasya Lumingkewas, an 8-year-old autistic girl.

~ *Carr Brackett* (2008): In this short film, Carr, a young man with Down syndrome, uses his AAC to support his communication needs in a general education classroom.

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Changes to expect from Biden's Department of Education led by Miguel Cardona

By Amanda Menas and Amanda Litvinov

January 22, 2021 ~
Education News

During the Biden-Harris administration, educators will have new opportunities to advocate for policies at the federal level that will benefit the lives of students, families, and school communities. Issues such as decaying school infrastructure, the digital divide, and lack of access to school nurses and counselors—the results of unjust funding and policies born of white supremacy—will begin to be corrected.

President Biden's nomination of Dr. Miguel Cardona as his education secretary shows he is serious about investing in public schools and listening to educators on what students need to succeed.

Lauren Mancini-Averitt is a high school social studies teacher in the Meriden School District, the same district where Miguel Cardona taught 4th grade, served as an elementary school principal, and later was named Assistant Superintendent for Teaching and Learning.

"he is truly an educator. He's inquisitive, he listens, and he knows how to work collaboratively," says Mancini-Averitt, who is in her second year as a local president and her 31st year of teaching.

She says Cardona didn't "turn all of that off" when he left the classroom to

become a principal, or when he was tapped to write a new teacher evaluation plan required by then-Gov. Dan Malloy. Cardona, who is committed to union-management collaboration, worked closely with educator unions to craft that plan.

"He doesn't walk in the room to be an official," Mancini-Averitt says. "He walks in to learn what's going on in the classroom or the school."

The Connecticut Education Association says Cardona shares many of their priorities.



Photo of Miguel Cardona on Dec. 23, 2020
(AP Photo/Carolyn Kaster)

"Cardona is a Connecticut public school educator who understands the federal role in increasing educational opportunities for all students, seeks teacher voices in collaborative efforts to help improve schools, and recognizes that highly qualified teachers are the greatest asset in public education," said Connecticut Education Association President Jeff Leake.

Cardona, who is currently Connecticut Education Commissioner, has long focused on education equity and is acutely aware that issues inside the schoolhouse and outside the schoolhouse—such as food insecurity, homelessness, and economic instability—have a tremendous effect on student learning. He gained that awareness not only through teaching; Cardona himself grew up in poverty in public housing in Meriden.

Given the commitments Biden has made to support public schools and address systemic inequities, educators should expect a 180-degree turn away from the lack of leadership and direction seen under Donald Trump's Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos.

Here are several things educators can expect from the Cardona-led Department of Education that supports President Joe Biden's priorities. They will:

1. Prioritize Public Schools

Biden's American Rescue Plan puts public education front and center. The plan includes a massive effort to contain the virus through vaccinations and support for public health systems. It sets aside \$130 billion for K-12 schools to help restore in-person learning and operate safely. Districts could use the funds to reduce class sizes, modify spaces to comply with social distancing guidelines, and hire

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custodians, nurses, and counselors to support students. Another \$35 billion would go to public institutions of higher education to help them implement campus safety protocols and provide emergency assistance for millions of students.

President Biden opposes schemes that pull money out of public education. He has stated that “when we divert public funds to private schools, we undermine the entire public education system. We’ve got to prioritize investing in our public schools, so every kid in America gets a fair shot. That’s why I oppose vouchers.” Vouchers continue to facilitate racial and socioeconomic segregation and weaken the wall of separation between church and state within our education system. By opposing the enactment of any new voucher programs or the expansion of existing programs, all public schools are protected.

2). Support Borrowers And Graduates

On his first day in office, President Biden extended the pause on student loan payments during the COVID-19 pandemic. He has also encouraged Congress to pass legislation to erase \$10,000 in federal student loan debt per student.

NEA President Becky Pringle praised Cardona’s nomination, in part because he will help make higher education more accessible to more students. “Dr. Cardona will help fulfill President Biden’s promises to make community college free, tackle the student debt crisis, and enable college graduates to pursue careers in education and public service by expanding and simplifying the Public Service Loan Forgiveness and Teacher Loan Forgiveness programs.”

Cardona’s department will be charged with addressing college affordability and holding private lenders accountable.

3) Hold Charter Schools Accountable

Public education should be our first

priority. Any program that diverts resources from the public schools that 90 percent of American students attend by definition undermines the promise of public education. As education commissioner for the state of Connecticut, Cardona (a former classroom teacher and union member) emphasized that advocacy for public schools was “the core work that not only myself but the people behind me in the agency that I represent will have.” Cardona also has experience holding charter schools accountable. In February 2020, the Connecticut State Board of Education placed three local school districts within the Achievement First charter network on probation after they repeatedly violated the state’s ground rules for operating a public school. Cardona said the network’s repeated non-compliance with state regulations made it seem like Achievement First thought of their oversight as “somewhat of a nuisance.”

4). Rely Less On High-Stakes, Standardized Tests

The over-reliance on high-stakes standardized testing in district, state, and federal accountability systems is undermining education quality and equity in U.S. public schools. Education Secretary-designate Miguel Cardona has previously criticized linking state tests to teachers’ evaluations, saying of his work in Connecticut, “Not reducing a teacher to a test score and bringing the voices of teachers and leaders into the process of professional learning—those are two things I really felt like I had to champion.” The Biden-Harris administration acknowledges that students deserve the opportunity to demonstrate their knowledge in multiple ways, including the ability to apply that knowledge as part of a project or performance assessment.

5). Close The Digital Divide/Homework Gap

About 16 million students don’t have the broadband internet and/or technology they need to participate fully in virtual learning. Like education, access to technology can be a great equalizer; its absence creates a digital equity divide. The federal government can help

bridge the digital divide by bringing new technologies and the power of high-speed internet to urban, rural, and under-resourced communities nationwide. In June 2020, Cardona said, “Fixing the digital divide is a major focus” during the Covid-19 pandemic. An analysis found that under Cardona’s leadership, Connecticut was “the first state in the country to provide its public school students with universal access to learning devices,” including “a laptop and access to high-speed internet so they can log in to school remotely during the pandemic.”

The Biden administration supports funding to help schools address the homework gap and plans to prioritize new infrastructure for students and communities of color to increase access to high-speed broadband. NEA strongly encourages Congress to supply this support through the effective, equitable, and proven E-Rate program.

6). Support Workers’ Rights

As a union member, Cardona has supported educators’ rights. The Board of Education Union Coalition, representing over 60,000 teachers, supported his nomination for secretary of education, calling Cardona “a positive force for public education — light years ahead of the dismal Betsy DeVos track record.” Additionally, Cardona was backed by the Connecticut Education Association, who said “his years as a teacher and administrators have been ‘critical to his accomplishments as Connecticut Education Commissioner.’”

Joe Biden believes “the federal government should not only defend workers’ right to organize and bargain collectively but also encourage collective bargaining.” He plans to make it easier for all workers to unionize and supports educators being able to bargain for better pay and benefits in addition to having a voice in decisions that affect their students. The Biden administration plans to provide a federal guarantee for public sector employees to bargain as their private-sector coparts have. ■

<https://educationvotes.nea.org>

Waiting Lists May Be Eliminated For Disability Services Provided By Medicaid

by Michelle Diamant | March 22, 2021

Work is underway on legislation that could fundamentally transform the nation's system of home- and community-based services, eliminating waiting lists and allowing people with disabilities to move across state lines without forfeiting critical services and supports.

A draft bill unveiled this month known as the HCBS Access Act would require Medicaid to provide home- and community-based services to everyone who is eligible and establish a minimum set of services that states must offer. The bill is also designed to help states create a network of providers and workers to deliver such supports.

The plan is being put forth by U.S. Rep. Debbie Dingell, D-Mich., along with Sens. Maggie Hassan, D-N.H., Bob Casey, D-Pa., and Sherrod Brown, D-Ohio.

The lawmakers said the "discussion draft" is a "first step to creating HCBS support for all those who are eligible and choose HCBS" and they are seeking feedback in the coming weeks from stakeholders before moving forward with introducing a formal bill.

"The HCBS Access Act would be a huge paradigm shift," said Nicole Jorwic, senior director of public policy at The Arc who's advocating for the legislation. "It's not an overstatement to say this would be a game changer for services and supports for people with disabilities."

Since home- and community-based services originated in the early 1980s, they have been optional. States provide the services through Medicaid waivers, which vary greatly from one place to another and are limited meaning that people with disabilities often spend years on waiting lists before they can access supports. The waivers are tied to the state where a person lives, so if an individual moves, they often must start the waiting list process anew. By contrast, Medicaid guarantees institutional services to those who qualify.

Under the draft legislation, that would change. Home- and community-based services would be mandatory in the Medicaid program, much like institutional services already are.

"For the 850,000 people on waiting lists, this would be life changing," Jorwic said. "When you pull that many people into this system, you're not only helping the people getting the sup-

ports and services, you're also helping family caregivers who are currently filling the gaps in the services system."

The draft bill would send more federal funding to states and create a basic menu of required home- and community-based services nationwide that states could choose to enhance. Advocates say this would eliminate confusion for families and simplify things for states, which currently operate a range of waiver programs, each with their own target populations and rules.

The lawmakers have also indicated that they intend to include provisions in the bill to strengthen the workforce that provides support to people with disabilities in the community, but they are currently short on specifics about that piece of the plan.

The move comes after President Joe Biden proposed eliminating waiting lists for home- and community-based services and boosting the direct care workforce during his campaign last year. "The current system is an artifact of a law that is over 55 years old and never envisioned community-based supports for older adults and people with disabilities," reads a note to stakeholders from the offices of Hassan, Brown, Casey and Dingell. "It is time to establish a baseline criteria for the delivery of HCBS across the country and to make those foundational services an entitlement under Medicaid."

Founded in 2008, Disability Scoop is the nation's largest news organization devoted to covering developmental disabilities. With daily coverage of autism, intellectual disability, cerebral palsy, Down syndrome and more, no other news source offers a more timely and comprehensive take on the issues that matter to the developmental disability community.

Readers include teachers, special educators, school administrators, therapists and other disability professionals in addition to parents and caregivers. What's more, lawmakers and the nation's most influential disability advocates rely on Disability Scoop to stay in the know.

For regular news updates, sign up for free e-newsletter and be sure to follow on Facebook and Twitter. To search job openings for professionals serving those with disabilities, visit Disability Scoop Jobs.

— <https://www.disabilityscoop.com>

Virginia Waiver Factsheet

<https://www.medicaid.gov/medicaid/section-1115-demo/demonstration-and-waiver-list/Waiver-Descript-Factsheet/VA>

• **VA Alzheimer's Assisted Living (40206.R02.00)**

Provides assisted living to aged individuals 65 - no max age and disabled other ages 18-64.

• **VA Building Independence Waiver (0430.R03.00)**

Provides group day services, independent living supports, individual supported employment, assistive technology, benefits planning, center-based crisis supports, community coaching, community engagement, community guide, community-based crisis supports, crisis support services, electronic home-based supports, employment and community transportation, environmental modifications, group supported employment, peer mentor supports, personal emergency response system (PERS), shared living, transition services for individuals w/autism and ID/DD ages 18 - no max age.

• **VA Children's Mental Health Waiver PRTF (01.R02.00)**

Provides in-home residential supports, respite, service facilitation, companion, environmental mods (home accessibility adaptations), family/caregiver training (training and counseling services for unpaid caregivers), therapeutic consultation (clinical and therapeutic services), transition coordination for SED individuals ages 0-21.

• **VA Commonwealth Coordinated Care Plus (0321.R04.00)**

Provides adult day health care,

personal assistance services, respite care services, services facilitation, assistive technology, environmental modifications, personal emergency response system (PERS), private duty nursing, transition services for aged individuals 65 yrs - no max age, disabled- physical 0-64 yrs, disabled- other 0-64 yrs, and technology dependent 0- no max age.

• **VA Community Living (CL) Waiver (0372.R04.00)**

Provides group day services, group home residential, individual supported employment, personal assistance services, respite, consumer-directed services facilitation, assistive technology, benefits planning, center-based crisis supports, community coaching, community engagement, community guide, community-based crisis supports, companion services, crisis support services, electronic home-based services, employment and community transportation, environmental modifications, group supported employment, in-home support services, peer mentor supports, personal emergency response system, private duty nursing, shared living, skilled nursing, sponsored residential, supported living, therapeutic consultation, transition services, workplace assistance services for individuals w/autism and ID/DD ages 0 - no max age.

• **VA Family and Individual Support Waiver (0358.R04.00)**

Provides group day services, in-home support services, individual supported

employment, personal assistance services, respite services, services facilitation, assistive technology, benefits planning, center-based crisis supports, community coaching, community engagement, community guide, community-based crisis supports, companion services, crisis support services, electronic home-based supports, employment and community transportation, environmental modifications, group supported employment, individual and family/caregiver training, peer mentor supports, personal emergency response system (PERS), private duty nursing, shared living, skilled nursing, supported living residential, therapeutic consultation, transition services, workplace assistance for individuals w/autism and ID/DD ages 0 - no max age.

* **VA HIV/AIDS (4160.R03.00)**

WAIVER TERMINATED 5/30/12 -

Provides case management, personal assistance, respite care, enteral nutrition, consumer directed services facilitation, assistive technology, environmental mods, PERS, private duty nursing, transition for individuals w/HIV/AIDS ages 0 - no max age.

• **VA Technology Assisted (4149.R03.00)**

Provides personal care, respite (skilled private duty nursing), assistive technology, environmental mods, private duty nursing, transition for technology dependent individuals ages 0 - no max age.

The Center for Medicaid and CHIP Services (CMCS) is one of six Centers within the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS), an agency of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). CMCS serves as the focal point for all the national program policies and operations for three important, state-based health coverage programs:

Medicaid provides health coverage to low-income people and is one of the largest payers for health care in the United States.

The Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) provides federal matching funds to states to provide health coverage to children in families with incomes too high to qualify for Medicaid, but who can't afford private coverage.

The Basic Health Program (BHP) allows states an option to provide affordable coverage and better continuity of care for people whose income fluctuates above and below Medicaid and CHIP eligibility levels

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