**HEALTH CARE**

In February, the Trump administration published a [proposed regulation](http://example.com) to allow for short-term insurance plans. This proposal builds on the President's [Executive Order (EO) 13813](http://example.com) - "Promoting Healthcare Choice and Competition Across the United States". The order directs revisions to existing regulations to expand the availability of short-term, limited-duration insurance and allow it to cover longer periods. Health care advocates are concerned these plans may waive consumer protections required by the Affordable Care Act, such as essential benefits, lifetime limits, and coverage for those with pre-existing conditions. Representatives Pallone (NJ), Neal (MA), and Scott (VA) issued a [press release](http://example.com) condemning the announcement. The public is invited to comment on this proposed rule with a deadline of April 23, 2018. The Consortium for Citizens with Disabilities (CCD) Task Force will be coordinating comments.

On February 5, the Trump administration approved Arkansas's request to impose work requirements on certain Medicaid beneficiaries, making it the third state to receive such approval. Arkansas follows Indiana and Kentucky this year in winning CMS’ approval for the work requirement. Like those plans, the Arkansas plan requires individuals to have a job, be in school or volunteer for at least 80 hours per month. The requirements will apply to “able-bodied” adults unless they qualify for an exemption because they care for a young child, are pregnant, are medically or mentally unfit to work, or are being treated for addiction, among other reasons. However, the administration did not make a decision on the state’s request to roll back the eligibility level for Medicaid beneficiaries, which would reduce the eligibility cap from 138% of the federal poverty level to 100%. If that provision is approved, combined with the work requirements, an estimated 60,000 people are projected to lose coverage. See more details in [The Washington Post](http://example.com) and an [analysis](http://example.com) by the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities.

**LONG-TERM SERVICES AND SUPPORTS (LTSS)**

LTSS enables more than 12 million Americans to meet their personal care needs and live with dignity and independence in various community and institutional settings. With Medicaid LTSS costs totaling more than $140 billion annually and the aging population projected to grow 18 percent by 2020, state and federal officials are increasingly seeking ways to improve both the quality and cost-effectiveness of the current system of care. The Center for Health Care Strategies held an hour-long webinar entitled [Strengthening Long Term Services and Supports: Strategies for States](http://example.com) which is now archived and available on their website.

**EDUCATION**

On February 27, the U.S. Department of Education published a notice of proposed rulemaking (NPRM) to postpone the compliance date of the “Equity in IDEA” or “significant disproportionality” Rule by two years until July 1, 2020. For children three through five, the Rule would be postponed for four years until 2022. When Congress last reauthorized the IDEA in 2004, it sought to correct disparate treatment of students of color with disabilities by requiring states, for the first time, to identify school districts with, and direct federal resources to address, gross inequities. The Autism Society opposes this action that delays important resources going to states and schools to correct these inequities. The [GAO](http://example.com) found that in 2010, states required only two percent of all districts to use IDEA funds for early intervening services to address the overrepresentation problem. The CCD Education Task Force immediately responded to the NPRM, saying “We have long been aware and research shows that students of color and other minorities are disproportionately referred to special education and subject to unfair discipline practices. There is no good reason for this delay.” Senator Patty Murray (WA) and Rep. Bobby Scott (VA), ranking members of the Senate and House Education Committees, also issued a [strong statement](http://example.com) opposed to the action. The deadline to provide comments is May 13, 2018. The Autism Society will provide
Last month, the House of Representatives passed the ADA Education and Reform Act (H.R. 620) to the dismay of many in the disability community. The bill creates a system whereby individuals whose rights are violated under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) must undergo additional and burdensome hurdles to enforce their civil rights. For nearly 28 years, the ADA has provided pathways for people with disabilities to engage and interact with society. H.R. 620 unravels decades of progress, making it harder for people with disabilities to actively participate in their communities. The Autism Society continues to work with national disability organizations to ensure the Senate fails to pass H.R. 620 or similar legislation. State and local affiliates are encouraged to sign on to a CCD letter urging the Senate not to introduce ADA notification legislation.

Senator Tammy Duckworth (D-IL) is preparing a letter to Senators McConnell (R-KY) and Schumer (D-NY) telling them they should not bring forward H.R. 620 or any similar bill to the Senate floor. We need help getting additional Senators to sign a letter opposing H.R. 620 or similar measure in the Senate. Please take a minute to call your Senators and ask them to sign on to the "Duckworth ADA letter protecting the rights of people with disabilities."

On March 6, Alison Barkoff provided testimony on behalf of the Consortium for Citizens with Disabilities (CCD) in a hearing of the U.S. House Judiciary Committee Subcommittee on Constitution and Civil Justice entitled, "Examining Class Action Lawsuits Against Intermediate Care Facilities for Individuals with Intellectual Disabilities (ICF/IDD)." The focus of the hearing was on whether to change the rules that apply to every other type of class action lawsuit only for cases involving people with IDD in ICFs. Several witnesses were family members who were unhappy with institutional closures in their state.

Barkoff urged the Committee not to move forward with this approach arguing that creating special rules that limit class actions involving people with IDD in ICFs is unnecessary, unfair, discriminatory and potentially dangerous. Class action lawsuits have been a critical tool to address abuse, neglect, inadequate services, and a lack of community options when other types of advocacy have failed. Furthermore, she explained that existing federal rules governing class actions and intervention already carefully balance diverse interests and ensure that all persons impacted by the case have a voice in the litigation and remedy. She urged the subcommittee to instead take steps to address the real problems, including under-funding of IDD services nationwide.

Autism Society’s policy staff attended the hearing. The hearing was recorded and is available on the subcommittee website along with links to the written testimony.

Mark Schultz, Director of Vocational Rehabilitation in Nebraska, was recently nominated by the President to be Commissioner of the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA). Mr. Schultz is a Deputy Commissioner in the Nebraska Department of Education. He previously served as the Director of Vocational Rehabilitation. In 2016, he was honored as the Nebraska Department of Education’s Supervisor/Manager of the year. His prior experience includes serving as the Director of the Nebraska Assistive Technology Partnership and as a Barrier Free Design Specialist for the League of Human Dignity, a Center for Independent Living. Mr. Schultz has over 35 years of experience with the development and provision of services for people with disabilities at a national, State, and local level. He is a past President of the Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation and a member of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act Information Technology Steering Committee. He earned a Bachelor’s Degree in Architectural Studies from the University of Nebraska, Lincoln and a Master’s in Public Administration from the University of Nebraska, Omaha. See more here.
AUTISM SOCIETY NATIONAL CONFERENCE AND EXPOSITION

Registration is now open for the 50th Annual Autism Society National Conference and Exposition, July 10 - 12, 2018, in Washington, D.C. -- home to the Autism Society's inaugural convening of individuals and families impacted by autism. This year's conference features innovative educational sessions, one-of-a-kind networking opportunities, great guest speakers, and a wealth of information on how the Autism Society’s Quality of Life goals can help shape the future of autism.

At our national conference, attendees will also engage with Congressional insiders and policy experts to gain insight on impacting change on Capitol Hill and at home. The event culminates with a Day on the Hill, where autism advocates from across the country meet with Congressional leaders and staff to discuss issues of critical importance to the autism community.

General conference registration includes access to the Opening Reception, Luncheon Keynote Session, breakout sessions and transportation to the Day on the Hill event with breakfast provided on Capitol Hill. See the schedule at a glance and register today!

AUTISM SOCIETY HOSTS GRASSROOTS ADVOCACY WEBINAR

On March 14, the Autism Society of America hosted a webinar for grassroots advocates entitled: How to Build Advocacy Efforts. Autism Society's Vice President, Kim Musheno sat down with state policy consultant Michelle King to discuss Federal Advocacy efforts of the Autism Society of America and provide tips and strategy for building effective policy advocacy at the local, state, and federal levels. Presenters also discussed building coalitions, designating policy point person, developing policy relationships, legislative interactions, and voter education and engagement. Listen the webinar recording here.

DISABILITY POLICY SEMINAR

The 2018 Disability Policy Seminar (DPS) is one month away. Join disability advocates in Washington, DC, April 23-25, 2018! The challenges and realities facing the disability community demand our continued focus and diligent advocacy. Medicaid, the Affordable Care Act, Supplemental Security Income, and Social Security are under threat. These federal programs provide the key to community living and inclusion for people with I/DD across the nation. Any cuts to these programs would be devastating.

To keep up the momentum and continue to make a difference, we must join together as a collective movement to ensure that our programs and civil rights are protected. Register today! The Autism Society of America is a supporting partner of DPS.

WEBINAR: HOW BENEFIT CUTS IMPACT PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

The Coalition on Human Needs (CHN) is hosting a webinar on combating threats to cuts to disability benefits, Tuesday, March 20, 2018. Learn about likely federal policy threats affecting people with disabilities in programs such as Medicaid, nutrition assistance, SSI/SSDI, housing and legal protections. Included in the webinar will be a discussion of effective messaging to combat these threats, and action steps you can take to get involved. Following the presentations, participants will have an opportunity to ask questions. Click here to register.

AUTISM SOCIETY WELCOMES NEW DR. RUTH SULLIVAN PUBLIC POLICY FELLOW
Meet Nicole LeBlanc, in her own words: Greetings everyone at the Autism Society. My name is Nicole LeBlanc, and I live in Silver Spring, Maryland. I am the Dr. Ruth Sullivan Public Policy fellow at Autism Society of America for the next six months where I will be supporting the policy team on strengthening its grassroots capacity. In the coming months, we will be launching an action center on our website that members can use to take action on public policy issues that impact our lives. We will also have an action center app that advocates can use on your phone or iPad. In addition to being a fellow at the Autism Society, I am also a Self-Advocacy Regional Technical Assistance Center policy fellow at the National Disability Rights Network (NDRN). There, I will be developing a guide self-advocates can use to advocate for policies addressing competitive integrated employment in the community.