



# Georgia Council On Developmental Disabilities 2017 LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

## Led By GCDD

### Support Employment First

Employment First means that employment should be the first and preferred option for all people, regardless of their disability. Under Employment First legislation, employment in the general workforce at or above minimum wage is the first and preferred option for all working age citizens with disabilities. Currently, the Georgia system creates many barriers for individuals with disabilities to work. Although the majority of Georgians with developmental disabilities want to work, only 12% of Georgians with developmental disabilities are currently employed in the community.<sup>1</sup> Under an Employment First policy, state agencies will need to re-align their policies and funding to prioritize employment for all working-age Georgians with disabilities.



*Fayetteville high school student Corbett Dishman works hard at Partners II Pizza after school.*



*Chad Roberts visited by Representative Scot Turner at his place of employment, Sweetwater Growers Hydroponic Farms.*

- **Support legislation that addresses employment barriers for people with disabilities, makes Georgia an Employment First state, and prioritizes competitive integrated employment for people with disabilities.**

### Support Students to Attend Inclusive Post-Secondary Education (IPSE) Programs in Georgia

Inclusive post-secondary education provides opportunities for students with intellectual disabilities to access higher education. This education prepares them to live increasingly independent lives and pursue careers of their choice.

Individuals with intellectual disabilities who receive post-secondary education are more likely to find paid employment than those who don't, and their earnings are 73% higher than their peers who do not receive post-secondary education.<sup>2</sup>

Thanks to legislative support, the number of inclusive post-secondary programs in Georgia has grown from one to five.<sup>3</sup> However, students in inclusive post-secondary programs have very few resources available to them to pay for these programs compared to what is available to students of traditional college programs. For example, IPSE students cannot access the HOPE scholarship program. Without financial support many qualified and eager students simply cannot afford the life-changing opportunity of inclusive post-secondary education.

- **Support the sustainability of inclusive post-secondary educational programs in Georgia and increase student access to these programs. Increase legislative funding from \$200,000 to \$500,000 in total, \$100,000 of which can be student scholarships. The FY 2018 ASK for new funding: \$300,000**

<sup>1</sup>National Core Indicators Adult Consumer Survey State Outcomes 2014-2015. National Association of State Directors of Developmental Disabilities Services and Human Services Research Institute. <http://www.nationalcoreindicators.org/states/GA/>

<sup>2</sup>Migliore, A., Butterworth, J., & Hart, D. (2009). Postsecondary Education and Employment Outcomes for Youth with Intellectual Disabilities. Think College Fast Facts. No 1. <http://www.thinkcollege.net/publications/fast-facts>.

<sup>3</sup>Number refers to the number of IPSE schools with students enrolled for the 2016 Fall Semester.

## We Need More DD Waivers

Out of the several Medicaid waivers that Georgia offers to those who qualify for this level of care, the NOW/COMP waiver has, by far, Georgia's longest waiting list. As of 9/30/16, there are 8,698 individuals with developmental disabilities on this waiting list. These individuals and their families are desperately hanging on and need Georgia to throw them a lifeline.

- **Fund at least 2470 NOW (1,976) /COMP (494) waivers to reduce Georgia's longest waiting list and allow more individuals to begin to receive services. \$33,058,273**



*Longtime advocates Heidi and Jacob Moore raise their voices for disability rights.*

## Children's Freedom Initiative: Bring Georgia's Children Home

There are a number of school-age children living in nursing facilities or intermediate care facilities in Georgia. These children did nothing wrong. They are in facilities simply because they have a disability and need care despite the fact that it is completely possible to care for them in the community. Georgia needs to shut the front door to these facilities and ensure every child has a permanent, loving home.

- **Support the Children's Freedom Initiative effort to ensure all children move into permanent, loving homes and have the care they need. Support legislation to prevent young Georgians under the age of 22 from being placed in intermediate care or nursing facilities. Provide funding for all of the young Georgians with disabilities under the age of 22 who are currently living in facilities to move into permanent loving homes and have the care they need.**

## Supported by GCDD but led by other entities

### Support Georgians Who Care for Their Families: The Family Care Act

Many Georgians balance their work lives with caring for their families. The Family Care Act would enable Georgians who have earned sick leave to use up to five days of that leave to care for sick members of their immediate family. The Family Care Act does NOT add any additional sick days or require employers to provide them; it only allows Georgians to use the sick days they've already earned to care for family members.

- **Support the Family Care Act**



*GCDD Council Member, Evan Nodvin, is visited at work by Representative Tom Taylor to raise awareness for Employment First.*



*Advocates attend Disability Day 2016 down at the Capitol.*

## Change the Standard to Prove Intellectual Disabilities in Capital Punishment Cases

In 2002, the U.S. Supreme Court said it is wrong to execute a person with intellectual disabilities because it violates the Eighth Amendment's ban on cruel and unusual punishment.<sup>3</sup> But right now in Georgia, it is extremely difficult for an individual to prove in court that they have an intellectual disability. Georgia is the only one of the fifty states that requires a person to prove "beyond a reasonable doubt" that they have intellectual disabilities in capital punishment cases.

- **Change the legal standard of proof for proving intellectual disabilities in O.C.G.A. to "preponderance of the evidence," which is the standard used in most other states.**

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## Support the Elder and Disabled Abuser Registry

Georgia needs an Elder and Disabled Abuser Registry comparable to the Child Abuse Registry established in 2016 in Georgia. This would allow employers of direct care workers to have a better way to screen potential employees and may deter abusers.

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## Support Enable Work

- The creation of the Phillip Payne Personal Assistance Program, a sliding fee scale program for workers with disabilities to pay a cost share that would allow them to access Personal Assistant Services to maintain their independence.
- The creation of PeachWork, a program whose purpose is to provide people with disabilities who are working the opportunity to earn as much as they can and accumulate savings while maintaining needed health coverage.

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## SPADD Housing Study Committee

Social Security income is the only resource available to many individuals with developmental disabilities to pay for housing. A legislative study of residential care costs and an exploration of funding to support I/DD organizations to bridge the gap between an individual's Social Security income and the cost of housing is necessary.

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## People First Legislation

Georgia is one of a few states that still uses language in policy that conveys negative or derogatory perceptions about people with disabilities. Appropriate substitute language is recommended along with the use of terminology that "puts the person before the disability."<sup>4</sup>

**"The Georgia Council on Developmental Disabilities proudly supports the UNLOCK! Coalition's Legislative Agenda. For more information, visit [GCDD.ORG/UNLOCK/](http://GCDD.ORG/UNLOCK/)"**



*Students at one of Georgia's Inclusive Post-Secondary Education Schools speaking with their legislator about the importance of making higher education accessible to all at one of GCDD's Advocacy Days.*

<sup>3</sup>See *Atkins v. Virginia*, 536 U.S. 304 (2002)

<sup>4</sup>The Arc US



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*The mission of the Georgia Council on Developmental Disabilities (GCDD) is to bring about social and policy changes that promote opportunities for persons with developmental disabilities and their families to live, learn, work, play and worship in Georgia communities.*

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**The Georgia Council on Developmental Disabilities and our statewide network of advocates are eager to work with legislators on our goals and to fulfill our mission. Please do not hesitate to reach out to us.**

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