



Georgia Council on Developmental Disabilities  
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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.*

### The Georgia Council on Developmental Disabilities is also proud to support...

- Changes to Georgia’s high school diploma system that will give more students with disabilities the opportunity to obtain diplomas and access further career and educational opportunities
- The creation of an Elder and Disabled Abuser Registry in Georgia that would allow employers of direct care workers to have a better way to screen potential employees and may deter abusers
- 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 that would allow workers with disabilities to pay a premium in order to receive medical coverage through Medicaid. Workers on this program could earn a modest income without putting their Medicaid health insurance at risk.

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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## Georgia Council On Developmental Disabilities 2016 LEGISLATIVE AGENDA



Rep. Mickey Stephens (center) on the job with Jazzmine Smith and Shyeeta Kelly at Memorial University Medical Center in Savannah.

Currently youth have the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, or IDEA, a standard that allows all children

with disabilities to go to school. Unfortunately, after high school, IDEA support ends and there is no standard support system for people with disabilities. Too many fall off the IDEA cliff and end up wasting away in institutions, day centers, sheltered workshops, jails, or on their parents’ couch without a way to contribute their gifts and talents to the broader world. Only a lucky few make it across the pit to pursue

further education, internships, and careers. However, if Georgia becomes an Employment First state and prioritizes competitive, integrated employment for people with disabilities, this could be a game-changer for its citizens with disabilities. Then, after high school, no longer would folks fall off the IDEA cliff, but

instead they would have the supports they need to pursue their dreams – whatever that might be.



Rep. Bruce Broadrick (left) joined Brett Wable at Shaw Industries where Brett is an instrumental member of the team.

### Make Georgia an Employment First State

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 8% 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.

- Support legislation that will make Georgia an Employment First State



Edwards Interiors employee Lindsay Kissow (right) demonstrated her work skills to Rep. Jon Burns.

1 - National Core Indicators 2013-2014. National Association of State Directors of Developmental Disabilities Services and Human Services Research Institute. www.nationalcoreindicators.org/charts

### 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 earn-

ings are 73% higher than 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 four. 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.

- Increase student access to inclusive post-secondary educational programs by creat-

ing a scholarship to mirror HOPE to assist students who could not otherwise afford these programs.

- Support the sustainability of inclusive post-secondary educational programs in Georgia by doubling the legislative funding from \$200,000 to \$400,000. The FY 2017 ASK for new funding: \$200,000

### UNLOCK! (formerly "Unlock the Waiting Lists")

The Georgia Council on Developmental Disabilities is proud to support "UNLOCK!" formerly known as "Unlock the Waiting Lists". The UNLOCK! campaign advocates with Georgians with disabilities so they and their families can live full lives and contribute to Georgia communities and the Georgia economy. We believe Georgia must

rebalance its system of long-term services and supports, so that fewer dollars are spent on institutional care and more dollars are invested into home and community-based supports (HCBS).

#### 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. There are over 8,000 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 1000 NOW/COMP waivers to reduce Georgia's longest waiting list and allow more individuals to begin to receive services. \$16,486,250

#### Address the ICWP Rate Disparity

The Independent Care Waiver Program (ICWP) provides vital assistance to people with significant physical disabilities and traumatic brain injury to help them with daily tasks such as toileting, bathing, dressing, meals, and housekeeping. The Medi-

caid reimbursement rate is so low, significantly lower than all the other Georgia Medicaid waivers, that it is extremely difficult to find qualified caregivers. By the time home health agencies take their cut, caregivers often are paid only \$8-9/hour.

- Increase the Independent Care Program's Personal Support rate to \$20/hour to be consistent with other Georgia waivers. We recommend phasing in this amount with an increase for FY 2017 of \$3/hour. \$7,975,490



An Unlock! advocate prominently holds a sign supporting Georgians with disabilities.

<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>.

### 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. 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.

- 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.



*"Imagine a future in which no child lives in an institution"*

### The ABLE Act in Georgia

An ABLE Account is a tax advantaged savings account that will allow people with disabilities to save money without putting their benefits in jeopardy. It is limited to individuals with significant disabilities who became disabled before age 26 and must be spent on certain qualified expenses. Although the federal legislation that enables

these accounts, the Achieving a Better Life Experience (ABLE) Act of 2013, was already passed by Congress and signed into law, states must pass their own ABLE bills to establish state ABLE programs for their residents.

- Support legislation to establish a Georgia ABLE program for Georgia residents

### 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



### 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.

But right now in Georgia, it is extremely difficult for

an individual to prove in court that they have intellectual disabilities. 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 the O.C.G.A. to a "preponderance of the evidence", which is the standard used in most other states.

