

# Georgia Council on Developmental Disabilities 2015 Legislative Agenda

**Real Homes. Real Careers. Real Learning. Real Support. Real Influence. Real Communities.**

The mission of the Georgia Council on Developmental Disabilities 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 Council with Executive Director Eric Jacobson (Standing, far left).

At GCDD, we know that Georgians with disabilities want to live full lives in our communities, and they are fully capable of doing so. **If we, the citizens of Georgia, choose to make positive changes to our system, more and more people with disabilities will be working in our communities, living with their families or their friends or independently as they so choose, and contributing to their communities all across Georgia.** When all our citizens are able to use their gifts and talents and pursue their dreams, it creates a better Georgia for us all.

The GCDD public policy team and our statewide network of advocates are eager to work with our legislators toward these goals. Please do not hesitate to reach out to us at any time.

Dawn Alford, Acting Public Policy Director

Dave Zilles, Parent Advocate

D'Arcy Robb, Public Policy Contractor, Employment First

Phone: 404.657.7409

[www.gcdd.org/public-policy](http://www.gcdd.org/public-policy)

## **Employment First for Georgians with Disabilities!**



Paula Clark (above) helped create a laundry sorting system that has been adopted by several of her co-workers.

**Support an Employment First policy for Georgia. In an Employment First policy, employment in the general workforce at or above minimum wage is the priority service outcome for individuals with disabilities in the publicly funded service system. Right now, that is not the case in Georgia. Service providers receive more money for supporting an individual in a non-work option than they do for supporting an individual to work in the community.**

Georgians with disabilities want to work, and with the right support, they can work and thrive. Just ask Nandi Isaac of Macon, who started her own photo/document scanning business; or Evan Nodvin of Dunwoody, who has worked full-time with senior citizens for the past 14 years and recently received a promotion.

When Georgians with disabilities work, it *benefits all Georgia taxpayers*. For every dollar put into employment support for Georgians with intellectual disabilities, Georgia taxpayers reap \$1.61 in benefits.<sup>1</sup>

But despite all this, *only 14% of Georgians with developmental disabilities are currently employed in the community.*<sup>2</sup> To change this situation, Georgia needs an Employment First policy - a clear-cut policy that works across agency lines to establish integrated employment as the priority outcome for individuals with disabilities in the publicly funded service system.

<sup>1</sup> Robert E. Cimera (2010) National Cost Efficiency of Supported Employees With Intellectual Disabilities: 2002 to 2007. American Journal on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities: January 2010, Vol. 115, No. 1, pp. 19-29.

<sup>2</sup> National Core Indicators 2011-2012. National Association of State Directors of Developmental Disabilities Services and Human Services Research Institute. <http://www.nationalcoreindicators.org/charts/>.

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## **Unlock the Waiting Lists!**



Supporters of "Unlock the Waiting Lists!" express their dedication at Disability Day at the Capitol.

The Georgia Council on Developmental Disabilities is proud to support "Unlock the Waiting Lists!". Unlock the Waiting Lists advocates investing in Georgians with disabilities so they and their families can live full lives and contribute to Georgia communities and the Georgia economy. Unlock the Waiting Lists and GCDD believe Georgia must rebalance its system of long-term supports, so that fewer dollars are spent on institutional care and more dollars are invested into long-term supports in the community.

[www.unlockthewaitinglists.com](http://www.unlockthewaitinglists.com)

- **Increase funding for 1,000 NOW/COMP waivers to address the community waiting list of over 7,000 Georgians. \$16,493,000**
- **Fund housing vouchers to support 100 Georgians with developmental disabilities who wish to live in their own home or apartment. \$600,000**
- **Increase the Independent Care Waiver Program's Personal Support rate to \$20/hour to be consistent with other Georgia waivers. We recommend phasing in this amount starting with increasing the Personal Support rate by \$3/hour for FY 2016. \$7,975,490.**
- **Fund 26 COMP waivers so that young Georgians with disabilities under the age of 22 who are currently living in nursing facilities or intermediate care facilities can move out of these facilities into permanent loving homes. \$799,316**

## **HOPE for Students: Inclusive Post-Secondary Education**

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 peers who do not receive post-secondary education.*<sup>3</sup>



Students, staff and guests of the Academy for Inclusive Learning at Kennesaw State University.

**Charlie Miller, a second-year student at the Academy for Inclusive Learning at Kennesaw State University, says, "The best way I can explain inclusive learning is it's a chance to fully express yourself out from under your mom and dad's wing, into being a productive person in society."**

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 are not currently eligible for the HOPE scholarship program. **Without HOPE, many qualified and eager students simply cannot afford the life-changing opportunity of inclusive post-secondary education.**

- **Allow students in Georgia's inclusive post-secondary education programs to access HOPE scholarship funds.**

<sup>3</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>.

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## 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 allow Georgians who have earned sick leave to use up to five days of that leave to care for sick or injured 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**
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## 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
  - **Annualization of the 2% cost-of-living adjustment** added in 2014 for providers of services and supports to persons with disabilities
  - **A 3% adjustment for providers to be utilized for wage increases for direct support professionals**
  - **Changing the legal standard of proof for proving intellectual disabilities in capital punishment cases to "preponderance of the evidence"**, which is the standard used in most other states.
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## **Mark Your Calendars: Disability Day at the Capitol - Thursday, March 5, 2015!**



Join thousands of constituents and advocates from all across Georgia at the state capitol for Georgia's largest annual advocacy event!

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The Georgia Council on Developmental Disabilities envisions a state in which all persons are included in all facets of community life, have choices while exercising control over their lives and are encouraged to achieve their full potential.

Eric E. Jacobson, Executive Director

Mitzi R. Profitt, GCDD Council Chair

Georgia Council on Developmental Disabilities  
2 Peachtree Street, NW • Suite 26 - 246 • Atlanta, Georgia 30303 • [www.gcdd.org](http://www.gcdd.org)

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## Contact the GCDD Public Policy Team



**Dawn Alford, Acting Public Policy Director:**  
[dawngcdd@gmail.com](mailto:dawngcdd@gmail.com)



**Dave Zilles, Parent Advocate:**  
[dzilles@earthlink.net](mailto:dzilles@earthlink.net)



**D'Arcy Robb, Public Policy Contractor, Employment First:**  
[darcy.t.robbs@gmail.com](mailto:darcy.t.robbs@gmail.com)