



****House adds 75 new NOW/COMP waiver slots and adds 50 cent increase to ICWP**

****HB 1 (Haleigh's Hope) passes the House 157-2**

Insider Highlights

Despite the winter weather this week, the Georgia General Assembly has been hard at work. This week the House passed its version of the budget, and it now goes to the Senate where they will work on their changes. Thanks to the help of our grassroots advocates, the House funded 75 new NOW/COMP waiver slots and a 50 cent per hour increase for personal support services in ICWP. Read more about this in the *Budget 101* section and don't forget to thank your representatives for their support (see #1 in *Advocacy of the Week*).

On Wednesday, February 25, HB 1, the medical cannabis bill known as Haleigh's Hope, overwhelmingly passed the House with a vote of 157-2. The bill's sponsor, Rep. Allen Peake (R-141), received a standing ovation, and Speaker Ralston congratulated him on his efforts. As it stands, the bill allows a maximum of 5% THC and covers nine conditions: cancer, ALS (also known as Lou Gehrig's disease), seizure disorders, multiple sclerosis, Crohn's disease, mitochondrial disease, fibromyalgia, Parkinson's disease, and sickle cell disease.

To see what Rep. Peake, himself, has to say about his bill, click [here](#).

Finally, our annual **Disability Day is next week on March 5th**. Don't miss your last chance to sign up online for this event today! See *Advocacy of the Week #2* for more details.

Advocacy of the Week

We need YOU to get involved TODAY. Here are some things that you can do this week:

1. Contact your state representative TODAY and thank them for their support of the Unlock ASKs. **"Thank you for supporting Georgians with disabilities and Unlock the**

Waiting Lists by funding a 50 cent/hour increase for ICWP personal support services and 75 additional slots for NOW/COMP waivers." Be sure to let them know that you are a constituent and give them your full name, address, and contact information. Find your state representative at www.openstates.org.

2. Disability Day is right around the corner (March 5). Don't miss your last chance to register online to attend. Remember, your voice counts! To register, please click the following link: http://www.ciclt.net/sn/events/e_signup.aspx?ClientCode=gcdd&E_ID=500061&RegType=ATT
3. Mark your calendar to join us for the weekly GCDD Public Policy calls every Monday at 9:30 a.m. during the session. Dial 1-888-355-1249 and enter 232357 at the prompt.

Advocacy Corner

On Thursday, February 19, we had our youth advocacy day, the fifth and final one of this session. Despite the frigid temperatures on this day, we had a small, but dedicated, group of youth who advocated with their legislators on issues facing young Georgians. They discussed the need for an [Employment First](#) policy, the need for more DD waivers, and more high school diploma options for people with disabilities so folks can get real jobs in the community or even attend college.



From left to right: Yvette Pegues, Ms. Wheelchair USA 2014/15 and Representative Katie M. Dempsey (R-13)

*****Advocacy Question of the Week*****

Q: In the February 14th issue of Public Policy for the People, we told you how to fill out a form and call your legislator to the ropes during the legislative session when you don't have an appointment. But do you know the single most important thing you can put on the form calling your legislator to the ropes?

A: Along with your name and contact information, ALWAYS let them know that you are their constituent first and foremost!

Budget 101

This section of the newsletter highlights the activities and information regarding the **Amended FY2015** (July 1, 2014 - June 30, 2015) and **FY2016** (July 1, 2015 - June 30, 2016) budgets.

FY2015 Amended Budget Update: The Governor signed HB75 (the appropriations bill for the FY2015 Amended Budget) on Thursday, February 19, 2015.

FY2016 Budget Update: On Tuesday February 17, public hearings were held where eight advocates testified and over 75 letters of support were submitted to the appropriations' subcommittees in support of the Unlock asks to raise the rate on the ICWP and add new NOW/COMP waivers. Thank you to all of you that helped with this effort. It paid off!

On Wednesday, February 25, the House Appropriations Committee approved their version of the FY 2016 Budget. See highlights below and note that the first two bolded budget items listed are part of the Unlock Ask that we got due to YOUR tremendous advocacy efforts:

DCH House Budget (line 17.7.12):

Increase funds to provide a \$0.50 per hour increase for personal Support Services covered under the Independent Care Waiver (ICWP) - \$1,329,428.

DBHDD House Budget (line 15.2.7):

Increase funds for 75 additional slots for NOW and COMP - \$1,124,226.

DCH House Budget (line 17.10.8):

Implement the scheduled increase of the employer contribution rate for non-certificated public school employees - \$102,825,000.

DHS House Budget (line 27.11.6):

Increase funds for Home and Community Services - \$1,500,000.

Georgia Vocational Rehabilitation Agency House Budget (line 27.26.7):

Increase funds to assist training and employment support for Georgians with disabilities - \$900,000.

To see the full version of the House budget, click below where it says "FY2016 Tracking House Version". The key sections of the budget most relevant to people with disabilities are:

Section 15: Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities

Section 17: Department of Community Health

Section 27: Department of Human Services

[FY 2016 Tracking House Version](#)

Now the budget goes to the Senate where we need to KEEP what we have gotten in the House and hopefully ADD more dollars to the budget for the Unlock ASKS for ICWP and NOW/COMP.

Check out the Unlock website for the most current budget information.

<http://unlockthewaitinglists.com/>

Bills

2015 Georgia Legislative Bills

This section will present a list of bills that GCDD is tracking by clicking on the link to the GCDD Legislative Report below. Please note the information within this section is current as of Wednesday, February 25, 2015 (cutoff for publishing).

Note that in the legislative report below, both the House and Senate bills will be listed by Bill Number, Sponsor, Title Summary, and the most current activity followed by Comments and Summary of the Bill. **Please note that the second line of each bill will reflect the date of the most recent action and what action was taken on this bill.**

You can also click on the bill number within the report to link to the actual bill language itself and get even more detailed information.

GCDD Legislative Report

For more information about the process a bill must take to become law in Georgia, click on the link below.

[Tracking a Bill through the General Assembly](#)

Dates to Remember

The latest adjournment resolution set the legislative schedule for the rest of this session. To see it, click [here](#).

Weekly GCDD Legislative call: Every Monday at 9:30 a.m. Dial 1-888-355-1249 and enter passcode 232357 at the prompt.

Children's Day at the Capitol: Wednesday, March 4

http://Georgiavoices.org/event/childrens-day-capitol-2/?instance_id=403

GCDD Disability Day at the Capitol: Thursday, March 5

To register for either Youth Advocacy Day and/or Disability Day, click the link below:

http://www.ciclt.net/sn/events/e_signup.aspx?ClientCode=gcdd&E_ID=500061&RegType=ATT

NOW/COMP Waiver Rewrite Virtual Meetings: March 5

Choose either 2-3pm OR 5-6pm. RSVP by March 5th at 9am to nowcompvirtual@gmail.com

Please indicate which section you will be attending and if you are a parent, self-advocate, or provider.

Department of Community Health Board Meeting: March 12

<http://dch.georgia.gov/board-meeting-schedule-0>

DD Advisory Council Meeting: Friday, March 20, 9:30am-2:30pm; location TBA

Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities Board Meeting: April 23

<http://dbhdd.georgia.gov/2015-dbhdd-board-meetings>

Resources/Quick Links

[Georgia Council on Developmental Disabilities 2015 Legislative Agenda](#)

For more One Pagers for Advocates, click below:

<http://www.unlockthewaitinglists.com/actionsalerts.html>

[Golden Rules of Legislative Visits](#)

[Webinar - Tips on How to Talk to Your Legislator](#)

[Accessibility on Capitol Hill](#)

[House committee meeting calendar](#)

[Senate committee meeting calendar](#)

[Watch the Session Live!](#)

[Find Your Senator and Representative](#)

Thank you from the GCDD Public Policy Team

Dawn Alford: Acting Public Policy Director

D'Arcy Robb: Public Policy Contractor - Employment First

Dave Zilles: Public Policy Contractor - Unlock the Waiting Lists - Parent Advocate

[Join our Advocacy Network Today!](#)



THE STATE'S LEADER IN ADVANCING PUBLIC POLICY
ON BEHALF OF PERSONS WITH DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES.

