



DON'T CUT OUR LIFELINE



What Can You Do to Help Protect the Lifeline?

Connect with Your Chapter(s) of The Arc

[The Arc has more than 665 chapters](#) in 48 states and the District of Columbia. Are you a member of or a volunteer with a chapter? If not, why not? Reach out to your local and state chapters to find out what activities they have planned to engage with your Members of Congress. If you do not have a chapter of The Arc in your area, consider connecting with other families, service providers, individuals with I/DD, or allies to engage in some of the ways outlined below.

Participate in [The Arc's Action Alerts](#)

The Arc has a big network of advocates across the country that stay informed and engaged on the issues by signing up on our website. When a vote is happening fast, or an issue is heating up in Congress, the people on this list are called upon to make a call or send an email to their Member of Congress. You will also receive important updates on what is happening in Congress and federal agencies that impacts people with I/DD.

These alerts ask you to make a phone call or send an email – it's a quick and simple way to support the I/DD movement and this contact does influence Members of Congress – you are their constituents, and they represent you in Washington. The alerts include brief background information and talking points to help guide your communication so that you are prepared.

Recruit Friends and Family to Join the Movement

We are only as strong as the volume of support we can generate on any given issue. And considering the debates ahead in Congress, we need all the help we can get. What's unique about the I/DD community is that almost everyone's life is touched by someone with I/DD, or someone related to a person with I/DD, or someone who

knows a direct support professional, or a teacher who helps to educate a child with I/DD. It's these people who will help us show our strength.

So recruit people to join you and The Arc!

- **Anytime:** Put a personal plea on your social media channels. Ask your network to sign up for [The Arc's action list](#), or read about our issues from our [blog](#) or [website](#).
- **When a critical vote's coming up:** Email your family and friends and ask them to take action. They may not want to sign up for another email list – but if the ask is coming from you, their friend, they may pick up the phone or send an email to help sway their elected officials.

Attend a Public Event Hosted By Your Member of Congress

When Members of Congress are back home in their districts, they often hold town hall meetings, office hours at grocery stores or libraries, or attend large community events so that they can hear from their constituents.

But not all of these opportunities are widely publicized. So reach out to your Member's [in-state office](#) to find out when you might catch them in person, and follow them on Facebook and Twitter in case they posts updates on events (see the social media guide). These don't have to be formal meetings – some of the most memorable and influential interactions a Member of Congress can have are when they are out in the community and by chance, encounter someone with a disability. Here's an example:

[A Chance Encounter Leads to a New Focus For Sen. Murphy](#)

At these opportunities, you can:

- ask a question (see Key Messages);
- share your personal story or connection to I/DD;



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Achieve with us.

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- bring copies of the Fact Sheets provided in this toolkit to leave with the Member and their staff;
- and thank them for their time – even if you don't agree in this encounter, you may be able to win them over on another issue important to people with disabilities.

Ask for a Meeting with Your Member

Many chapters of The Arc arrange meetings with Members of Congress so that they can learn about the services and supports their chapter provides in the community, and include people with I/DD, support professionals, family members, and others in those meetings. Reach out to your chapter to find out what they're planning and how you can get involved.

Or you can arrange for a personal meeting with your Member. The Member's time is tightly scheduled and so the other methods outlined above may be faster to accomplish – but Members are looking to connect with their constituents, and meetings provide a block of time

dedicated to your issues and concerns. For more information about how to prepare and general tips on having a meeting with Members [click here](#).

Tell Us About Your Experience

It's really important for The Arc's national staff to hear about how your contacts with your Member went, and what we can do to support you in future relationship-building efforts. Our national public policy team is continuously meeting with Members of Congress and their staff members, so it's critical that we know about your work on the ground to cultivate these relationships so that we can work in tandem to promote the rights of people with I/DD.

1. Fill out our legislative contact form if you visit a town hall or meet with a Member.
2. Share your photos from your advocacy efforts at lifeline@thearc.org.
3. Have questions or concerns about this process? Contact us to discuss – lifeline@thearc.org.