



DON'T CUT OUR LIFELINE



Why Is It Important to Talk with Members of Congress?

When Congress is not in session, (often called “recess”), Members of Congress (referred to here as “Member”) go back to their home states and are looking for ways to connect with their constituents. People with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities (I/DD), their families, friends, direct support professionals, teachers, co-workers, and others make up a large portion of a Member of Congress’ constituency – that’s why it is important that Members are aware of our issues!

The presence of members of The Arc in a Member’s state or Congressional district offers an opportunity for a Member to connect with people with I/DD, to learn about our [national legislative priorities](#), and to make connections to the work they are doing in Washington.

Just like everyone else, Members of Congress are likely to have a connection to someone who has I/DD, but they may not connect the dots about the needs of people with I/DD to something they are voting on in Washington. As advocates, it’s our job to educate them about The Arc’s values, [positions](#) and [policies](#) and make them think about how their work and votes impact us. Members of Congress are always looking for stories from back home to illustrate why they are voting a certain way or making an issue a priority – getting to know you can help advance disability issues by giving them a personal reason to support our issues.

- Majorities in the House and Senate have voted for **deep cuts to Medicaid** and fundamental structural changes that would eliminate the entitlement to services and undo the system of supports and services for people with I/DD.
- Congress must act by the end of 2016 to prevent a **20 percent across-the-board cut in SSDI** benefits – but instead, on day one of the 114th Congress the House passed a [rule](#) creating hurdles to making the financial adjustment needed to prevent benefit cuts. And in both the House and Senate, Members have [proposed bills](#) to cut SSDI and create new barriers to work for SSDI beneficiaries.

We Need to Make Our Voices Heard Now.

Over the summer Congressional leadership plans to write legislation to implement the Medicaid cuts, and decisions will move forward about SSDI and other serious threats to our lifeline programs. We call these supports lifeline programs because the health care and community living support provided by these programs allow people with I/DD to live healthy and full lives in the community.

Relationship building with Members of Congress occurs all year long. This April, chapters The Arc and individual advocates already made a difference by attending the Disability Policy Seminar and connecting with their Members of Congress. Let’s build the momentum by continuing to connect. There are many opportunities for you to make your voices heard and this toolkit will give you the tools and resources to make it happen.

Time is short so let’s get started!



*For people with intellectual
and developmental disabilities*

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Why Engage Now?

Lifeline programs which are critical to people with I/DD, such as Medicaid and Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI), are currently under attack:

Achieve with us.®