



## **The 81st Texas Legislature Weekly Review: Week Fifteen**

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### **1. The State Budget**

The Texas House of Representatives approved and passed their version of the budget early last Saturday morning. There were several amendments made to the health and human services budget on the House floor that do impact the amount of funding allocated for the DADS Promoting Independence (HCS "slots" for individuals moving out of State Schools and large ICFs/MR) initiative and the amount of funding allocated for across the board reductions on the waiting lists. We are currently working with legislative staff to determine the exact impact such amendments will have on the House version of the budget.

At this time, we encourage all of you to call your legislators and urge them to support Senator Ogden's Rider 48. Rider 48, in the Senate version of the budget, appropriates \$200 million in General Revenue (state funds) to reshape the service delivery system for persons with intellectual and developmental disabilities. It provides a significant number of HCS and CLASS program "slots" to address the disproportionate wait time for these programs. The initiative restores the safety-net for this population by returning funds to MHMR Centers. This initiative also caps the State Schools census at 3,000 individuals and directs the state agency to move 500 people out of institutions over two years. The initiative also removes the HCS case management function from providers and places this responsibility with MRAs. It is a great initiative! To find your legislator, go to <http://www.fyi.legis.state.tx.us/>.

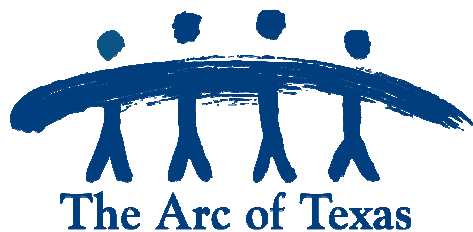
### **2. Medicaid Buy-In for Children**

SB 187 by Senator Bob Deuell passed out of the House on 4/23/2009 and sent to the House for consideration on 4/24/2009. The House companion, HB 67 was placed on the major state calendar and will be heard on the House floor on Monday, April 27, 2009. If passed, this bill would allow parents to purchase Medicaid for Children and Youth with Special Healthcare Needs (CYSHN) up to the 300% poverty level.

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### **3. State Schools**

Last week, we informed you that a number of bills were considered in both the Senate Health and Human Services Committee and House Human Services Committee. All of these bills are still pending but could likely be brought up for a vote soon. Stay tuned for action alerts as we will NEED your help to move these bills through the process.

This week, House Human Services heard HB 2921 by Representative Susan King that would allow local Mental Retardation Authority's (MRA) and other community providers to contract with State Schools to use their available services. We provided testimony to the committee and provided our concerns regarding the State Schools current capacity and ability to provide quality services to people in the community.

### **4. Education Update:**

#### **Action Alert:**

**Please contact Senate Education Committee Members in Support of SB 2083.**

SB 2083 will likely be voted on in the Senate Education Committee on Tues., Apr. 28th. SB 2083 will develop a new and innovative way for parents and teachers to provide input on the quality of special education services for students with disabilities in Texas. SB 2083 will provide an opportunity for every parent and teacher to participate in an annual internet based and confidential survey, about their child's /student's education program, the ARD meeting, training, due process, post school outcomes and other important issues. Families, school boards, and TEA will be able to see and use the information obtained in their school's results of the survey. Today in Texas we have a statewide monitoring and accountability system that does not provide real information about whether a student with disabilities is truly being prepared for further education, employment and independent living, the stated goals of IDEA. The purpose of this bill is to design and implement a new tool that will measure and improve outcomes for students with disabilities. The survey will help schools and parents design a more effective education—one designed to ensure students with disabilities achieve at a higher level and lead to the student's desired post school outcomes. The bill also includes success grants for certain schools.

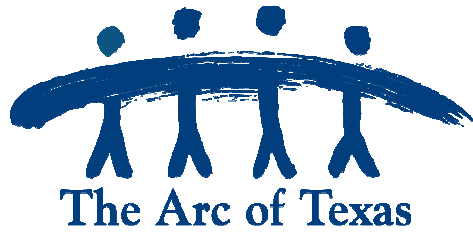
Please contact the members of the Senate Education Committee (see the committee list below) and ask them to pass SB 2083 because we need an effective way to measure the quality of special education programs in preparing students with disabilities for a successful and productive post school life.

Other Education News – Thank you for your support of several key special education bills that have passed out of the Senate and will make their way over to the House Public Education Committee in the next couple of weeks. We will need your support again to make sure these bills are passed out of the Committee and voted out of the House. These are some of the key bills that are moving over to the House Public Education Committee:

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SB 1125 regarding transition services passed out of the Senate and has been referred to the House Public Education Committee

SB 1490 moving TEA due process hearings to the State Office of Administrative Hearings (SOAH) passed out of the Senate and has been referred to the House Public Education Committee

For more information on the state budget process or the state's health and human services budget, contact Amy Mizcles at [amizcles@thearcoftexas.org](mailto:amizcles@thearcoftexas.org).

### **5. Arc Days at the Capitol**

Thank you again, to all the advocates who have come to make an impact in the 81st legislative session—you are making a difference! This week *The Coastal Bend Advocates* came to discuss community living and respectful language with their representatives and senator. In addition, *The Arc of Greater Tarrant County* told their stories and delivered invitations to our final legislative breakfast!

Congratulations to both groups of advocates on having resolutions filed and getting recognition on the House Floor!! Representative Abel Herrero recognized his constituents in Corpus Christi on Wednesday, April 22 and Representative Vicki Truitt recognized her constituents from Greater Tarrant County on today! To email thank you notes to both representatives for their support of The Arc and people with intellectual and developmental disabilities click on their email addresses below!

[Abel.herrero@house.state.tx.us](mailto:Abel.herrero@house.state.tx.us)

[Vicki.truitt@house.state.tx.us](mailto:Vicki.truitt@house.state.tx.us)

### **6. We're on Twitter!**

The Arc of Texas has a Twitter account to make it easier for members and friends to know what we are doing at the Capitol. In addition to The Arc of Texas specific updates, we track Governor Rick Perry, Speaker Strauss, and many other legislators!

To follow The Arc of Texas, search for **Amy Mizcles** and request to follow her.

If you not have a Twitter account, sign up by going to the following link:

<https://twitter.com/>

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