



Texas

For people with intellectual  
and developmental disabilities.



## PUBLIC POLICY PRIORITIES: 89TH TEXAS LEGISLATIVE SESSION

*The Arc of Texas advocates for public policy that prioritizes community-inclusion for Texans with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD). This overview covers one of our four policy pillars.*

### INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

We believe students with IDD deserve access to a free, appropriate public education in the least restrictive environment as outlined in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). Early education and intervention services are essential to success and independence in life and ensure Texans with IDD have skills to thrive in their communities post-graduation.

*See three related policy priorities below.*

#### 1. Equitable Funding for Special Education Services

- Texas' settings-based funding model for special education, implemented in the 1990s, is based on the amount of time students spend in special education settings – an approach that no longer reflects the evolving needs of students or the comprehensive services outlined in their Individualized Education Programs (IEPs).
- The **\$2 billion shortfall** between what school districts spend and what the state funds for students with disabilities limits resources, specialized staff, and support services, resulting in inadequate educational opportunities and hindered academic success.

#### PROPOSED SOLUTION

- *Implement the Special Education Funding Commission's recommendation to shift to an intensity-based funding model that addresses each child's unique educational needs.*

## 2. Promote Safe and Inclusive School Environments

- Students with disabilities are disproportionately subjected to physical restraint, leading to emotional trauma, learning disruption, and hindered academic progress. Staff training on positive behavior interventions and de-escalation strategies would reduce this harm.
- Students with disabilities are often excluded or inadequately considered in school emergency plans. Planning for their unique needs ensures appropriate protection and fosters a safer, more inclusive environment for everyone in an emergency.

### PROPOSED SOLUTIONS

- *Address the disproportionate use of physical restraints on students with disabilities by enhancing educator training on positive behavior and de-escalation strategies.*
- *Ensure school safety and emergency plans are inclusive of students with disabilities.*

## 3. Expand Access to Inclusive Higher Education

- Higher education is inaccessible to many Texans with IDD because conventional college programs do not accommodate their unique academic, social, and personal needs.
- Inclusive postsecondary programs help students with IDD gain academic skills, develop social connections, and prepare for meaningful employment. They promote greater independence and integration into society by bridging the high-school-to-workforce gap.

### PROPOSED SOLUTION

- *Establish funding opportunities for colleges/universities to create inclusive postsecondary programs supportive of the academic and social needs of students with IDD.*



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