

In Brief

Disability Policy News, every Monday

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Budget/Appropriations

On July 7, the House Labor-HHS-ED Appropriations Subcommittee marked-up a fiscal year (FY) 2017 funding bill. The bill provides topline amounts and proposes spending \$161.6 billion in discretionary funding, a cut of \$569 from FY 2016 and \$2.8 billion below the President's budget. Proposed amounts include: \$2 billion for Administration for Community Living, which is \$11 million above the FY 2016 enacted level and \$117 million below the budget request; \$6.1 billion for HRSA, \$218 million below the FY 2016 enacted level and \$168 million above the budget request; \$33.3 billion for NIH, \$1.25 billion above the FY 2016 enacted level and \$2.25 billion above the budget request; and \$7.8 billion for CDC, \$605 million above the FY 2016 enacted level and \$800 million above the budget request. For more details, see bill summary [here](#). The bill is expected to be considered by the full committee this week. To date, Congress has yet to pass any of the 12 spending bills. Since Congress is going out for recess during the national conventions followed by August recess, there are very few legislative working days left to complete work on the 12 annual appropriations bills making a continuing resolution is very likely. More details will be shared as they become publicly available.

Zika

Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-KY) is planning to bring the [House-passed](#) conference package to the floor for another vote this week, most likely late in the week in order to put pressure on Senate Democrats to approve the bill as written, with offsets and [riders](#) that Democrats oppose. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, as of July 6, there were 1,133 Zika cases in U.S. states and D.C. and 2,534 cases in Puerto Rico and other U.S. territories. As of June 30, there were 320 pregnant women with evidence of infection in the states and 279 in the territories.

Americans with Disabilities Act

On July 7, the House Judiciary held a full Committee mark up on *ADA Education and Reform Act of 2015* ([H.R. 3765](#)), a bill that would weaken the ADA. The CCD Rights Task Force, of which AUCD is a member, sent a [letter](#) to Trent Franks (Chair of House Judiciary) and Steven Cohen (Ranking Member of House Judiciary) in opposition to the bill. The letter strongly opposes the bill, stating it would create barriers to civil rights for people with disabilities that do not exist in other civil rights laws. The bill would seek to limit the power of the ADA and reduce compliance with the law. This bill also intends to criminalize attempts to enforce a person's civil rights. [View the mark up](#), amendments, and results on the committee website.

Health Care

AUCD sent a [letter](#) to Senator Joni Ernst (R-IA) thanking her for her leadership in introducing the *Credit for Caring Act of 2016*, which amends the Internal Revenue Code by adding a nonrefundable tax credit for working family caregivers. The credit amounts to 30% of the cost of long term care expenses that are between \$2,000 and \$3,000 in a year. To be eligible for the tax credit, caregivers must pay or incur expenses for providing care to a dependent relative with long-term care needs who has earned more than \$7,500 for the taxable year. A licensed health provider must certify caregivers. If the bill is passed, this tax credit would reduce financial pressure placed upon families who provide home care for dependents with a disability, and could be used to handle

expenses related to assistive technology, respite care, and home care aids. [A summary of the bill](#) is posted on the AUCD website.

Helping Families in Mental Health Crisis Act

On July 6, the House passed the *Helping Families in Mental Health Crisis Act of 2015* ([H.R. 2646](#)) by a [vote](#) of 422-2. The bill creates a new HHS Assistant Secretary for Mental Health and Substance Use Disorders, who would take over the duties of the SAMHSA Administrator. The legislation also conditionally expands Medicaid coverage of mental health services and requires Part D (Voluntary Prescription Drug Benefit Program) of Medicare to cover antidepressants and psychotics.

Child Welfare and Mental Health

On June 21, the House passed the *Family First Prevention Services Act* ([H.R. 5456](#)); however, this is not the case for the Senate ([S. 3065](#)). As the Senate is scheduled to leave for recess next week followed by August recess, the Child Welfare and Mental Health Coalition, of which AUCD is a member, is continuing to collect national and state organization signatures for a joint letter of support in order to emphasize the importance of moving this bill forward to final passage. The Act takes a historic step forward to increase federal investments in prevention to keep more children safely with their parents or family caregivers and out of foster care, and in support of the bill's emphasis on quality residential treatment to ensure the needs, and clinical needs, of children with severe emotional, or behavioral disorders or disturbances are met. Senator Hatch (R-UT) is the sponsor of the bill and Senators Wyden (D-OR), Grassley (R-IA), and Bennet (D-CO) have cosponsored.

Education

ESSA

The Department of Education released two [Notices of Proposed Rulemaking](#) to implement parts of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) that concern assessments. The Department unveiled new proposed regulations for Title I, Parts A and B. Both sets of proposed regulations respond to feedback the Department has received regarding student assessments since ESSA was enacted last year. The public comment period will be open for 60 days from the date published in the *Federal Register* (not yet published). AUCD will be providing comments. If you are interested in being on a workgroup to provide comments, please contact [Kim Musheno](#).

ABLE Act Implementation

Ohio, Tennessee, Nebraska, and Florida now have active ABLE account programs; all of the states (except for Florida) have *national enrollment*, which means you can open an account regardless of being a resident in that state. Alaska, Illinois, Iowa, Kansas, Minnesota, Missouri, Nevada, Pennsylvania, and Rhode Island have elected to work together in an effort to provide their residents with access to ABLE accounts in a cost-effective manner. The National Disability Institute is planning a [webinar](#) that includes the four states with ABLE programs to provide stakeholders with more information (tentative date is July 26). Also, a [side-by-side comparison](#) of the four states with ABLE programs that will be posted on the [ABLE National Resource Center](#).

Technology

On July 14, the House Ways and Means Subcommittee on Social Security will hold a hearing on *Modernizing Social Security's Information Technology Infrastructure*. The hearing will focus on the current state of the Social Security Administration's (SSA) Information Technology (IT) infrastructure, the agency's IT modernization plan, and best practices for IT modernization efforts. This hearing is being held for a number of reasons, primarily because the SSA relies on outdated information technology systems and in the FY 17 President's Budget request, the SSA stated that they have exhausted all small efforts to modernize IT and are at a point where undertaking a multi-year effort is imperative. Given this, the SSA requested \$300 million to use over 5 years to modernize its computer languages, databases and infrastructure, but did not include a plan for completing this project on time and within budget. Visit the Committee [web site](#) for more information and to access live video of the hearing.

RNC-Related Disability Event

AUCD, AAPD, and NDSS are co-sponsoring a disability luncheon: *ABLE to Work: A Forum to Advance Economic Empowerment for Americans with Disabilities*. The event takes place next week in Cleveland, Ohio in conjunction with the Republican National Convention. The event will feature national, state and local elected officials, people with disabilities and disability leaders and advocates who have taken an interest in an economic empowerment agenda. For more information, contact [Crystal Pariseau](#) or [Christine Grosso](#).

Tuesdays with Liz: Disability Policy for All

This week's edition of *Tuesdays with Liz: Disability Policy for All*, Liz interviews Carol Wright, Assistant VP of Mobility & Transportation at Easter Seals, about the new transportation center called *National Aging and Disability Transportation Center* and its website. In case you missed last week's edition, Liz spoke to [Kelly Israel](#) from the Autistic Self Advocacy Network (ASAN) about the proposed FDA rule to ban the use of electric shock devices.

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