



## 2016-2017 Policy Priorities

*Achieve with us.*

**SSLC Reform:** Texas has 13 state supported living centers that serve a little over 3,000 people with disabilities. At the same time, we have more than 109,000 people waiting to receive long term services and supports in the community. We can serve on average, 3 people in the community for every 1 person we serve in a SSLC. The SSLC census has seen a 75% decrease in demand over the past 15 years without making changes that reflect the decrease. It is time to reform the system so Texas can better meet the demand for services of people with disabilities that is effective and financially responsible.

**Employment:** Contributing to society and earning a living are strong Texas values, but for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities, too many barriers exist to obtain meaningful employment. One way Texas can enhance employment opportunities is by phasing out sub-minimum wage payments in state contracting practices and ensure individuals have the supports they need to successfully work in competitive, integrated employment. Doing so would ensure that tax payer dollars are not going to fund programs that discriminate in pay to people with disabilities.

**Transition:** Texas is the first state to put supported decision-making in the law as one of many alternatives to guardianship for people with disabilities. We would like for transition planning teams to incorporate this new law into the information they provide to parents and students. In addition to that, The Arc of Texas wants to move the transition age to 11 (6th grade) to engage parents and students sooner so they are more empowered to successfully transition after high school.

**Education:** Positive behavior supports are evidence-based practices that are necessary for some students with disabilities to meaningfully participate in their educational experience. However, there is very limited access to positive behavior support professionals for parents and students with disabilities. By increasing access and availability, more students with disabilities will be able to learn alongside their peers in general education classrooms and make greater gains on their Individual Education Plan (IEP).

**Improved Community Based Services:** Texas has made great strides moving people with disabilities back into the community and out of large facilities. We must continue this trend. Now that most individuals with disabilities are living in the community, we want to ensure that the services they receive are high quality and measured by the outcomes they create.

Texas ranks 50th in the nation for funding services for people with disabilities. This is unacceptable for a state with the 12th largest economy in the world. The Arc of Texas is advocating for a 20% reduction across all Medicaid Waiver waitlists (HCS, TxHmL, CLASS, MDCP, DMBD) which currently stands at more than 105,000 individuals.

## Minimum Wage for Everyone Isn't Just Right, It's a Texas Value

- It is legal to pay someone with a disability less than minimum wage.
- More than 9,000 Texans with disabilities earn less than minimum wage with a majority of them earning less than \$.50 per hour. The lowest paid Texan earns just \$.01 an hour.
- Subminimum wage is meant to be a transition into work that pays minimum wage or higher. Research shows, however, that once you start earning subminimum wage, you do not transition away from it.
- Employers can pay less than minimum wage by applying for a 14(c) waiver, which is a special wage certificate created in 1938.
- The State Use Program gives more than \$5 million to organizations to help employ individuals with disabilities.
- There are six organizations in Texas that receive state dollars through the State Use Program and pay subminimum wage.
- The Arc supports phasing out subminimum wage from state contracts to promote meaningful opportunities for Texans with disabilities.

The desire to work and earn a living is universal among all people, including individuals with disabilities. Texans with disabilities deserve the same dignity in bringing home a paycheck that allows them to contribute to their communities and embrace longstanding Texas values like personal responsibility and independence.

For more information contact: Kyle Piccola,  
Chief Government and Community Relations Officer, 512-454-6694 or [kpiccola@thearcoftexas.org](mailto:kpiccola@thearcoftexas.org)