

The Arc of New Jersey Legislative Questionnaire  
Raj Mukherji  
District 33

Question 1 -

As a public official who has spent much of my adult life championing causes of importance to vulnerable citizens (whether socioeconomically, uniquely-abled, or otherwise), it has been my privilege as a freshman lawmaker to fight to prioritize New Jerseyans with intellectual and developmental disabilities in two consecutive budget cycles as a member of the Assembly Budget Committee. My efforts, and those of my colleagues, would not have been possible without the unparalleled advocacy of the Arc of New Jersey. Those efforts included my sponsorship of a budget resolution seeking a 3% cost of care increase in DDD provider contracts (in the modest amount of \$21 million) to support individuals with I/DD in services as well as the direct support professionals who provide those services. This was a critical measure to maintain the quality supports and services for this vulnerable population from community providers that had not seen a cost of care increase for six budgets.

It is important that policymakers and appropriators do not compromise on access to healthcare and supportive services by individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities. During the most recent appropriations act process, I advocated for additional funding for individuals on the waiting list, students with I/DD aging out of their educational entitlements, housing vouchers targeted for citizens with I/DD, and a one-time transitional payment to DDD contractors shifting from contract reimbursement to fee-for-service to ensure uninterrupted care for our vulnerable friends with I/DD.

Furthermore, I am proud to be a primary sponsor of legislation of interest to individuals with I/DD, such as A2888, which would require all teacher preparation programs to include a special education component and would direct the State Board of Education to develop an autism spectrum disorder endorsement; A3149, which would provide for voluntary contributions by taxpayers on income tax returns to support autism programs and create a special fund in the Treasury called the "Autism Programs Fund;" and A1669, which would redirect vehicle surcharge revenues to support children with developmental delays and disabilities enrolled in the Early Childhood Intervention Program.

Question 2 -

The current state of the waiting list is absolutely shameful. I will continue to, as I have in the past two budgets, advocate for additional funding for new placements and a reduction in the wait time to ease the burden on families and caregivers who may be ill-equipped to provide the necessary supportive services many of these individuals require.