

CRAAG

Charlottesville Region Autism Action Group

**February/March 2022
CRAAG Newsletter**



Happy Valentine's Day 2022

Publishing a CRAAG newsletter on Valentine's Day is a great opportunity to remind our readers how much we appreciate and love you for supporting and advocating for yourself (as self-advocates) or for someone you love with a developmental disability. Advocacy is a labor of love! Thankfully we are all in this together!

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Advocacy

Part 1: The Challenge of the GA Session

Virginia has a new Governor, Glenn Youngkin, and a divided Virginia General Assembly (GA). Candidate Youngkin released a letter to Virginia's disability community before the election. He promised, "As Governor, I will empower parents and families to make the best educational, job training, and care choices for their loved ones by transforming our systems into more transparent and effective organizations." [Read the letter here.](#)

Governor Glenn Youngkin is a newcomer to politics. That makes it difficult to use a past voting record to understand how he will budget for the needs of people with DD. *We do know it will take money, more money than any previous Governor has been willing to budget to solve this workforce and provider capacity crisis.*

After the election, a letter co-authored by representatives from The Arc of Virginia, CRAAG, Faison Center, Hope House, and Our Stomping Ground (OSG) and endorsed by 18 stakeholder and advocacy organizations from across the Commonwealth was sent to Governor-Elect Youngkin and his transition team. The letter outlines *Issues and Solutions* for what we consider to be a *System in Crisis*. [Read the letter here.](#)

The DD system is in crisis and needs a major infusion of funding to save it from collapse. Amid the DD workforce and capacity crisis, The Arc of Virginia and vaAccess, along with their patrons, Senator Hanger and Delegates Sickles and Gooditis, launched the **DD System Rescue Plan**. [Read the Plan here.](#) This bold agenda of amendments to the budget invests in solutions that will systematically transform the DD System from a costly *reactive* system that only intervenes once someone is in crisis, to a *proactive* system. It offers an ambitious timetable for implementation and focuses on equity and sustainability for our system.

CRAAG has set two advocacy goals:

- **Meet** (virtually) with as many of our region's legislators as possible during the GA Session to support the **DD System Rescue Plan**. An email campaign to the House Appropriations and Senate Finance Committee members is a component of this goal as well. (See Part 3 below.) In addition, if you are interested in writing your Delegate or Senator, you will find the email addresses in Part 4 below.
- **Share** real time DD family stories for publication in our advocacy work. It is not well understood that the support needs of individuals with autism and DD do not end after High School. We want stories from self-advocates, parents, siblings and neighbors on different aspects of life for an adult with autism and DD. This is a longer term goal, lasting beyond the GA Session. If you are interested in sharing your story, please [email](#) CRAAG for more information.

Part 2: The FY23/24 Budget: What's at Stake?

It is time for the Commonwealth to make long overdue investments in **Home and Community-Based Services (HCBS)** to support developmentally disabled Virginians throughout the lifespan. The Commonwealth's DD waiver program currently authorizes 16,504 waiver slots, but over 14,000 Virginians languish on the wait list for desperately needed services. Many current DD waiver recipients report difficulty in accessing the services they need to lead full and productive lives in a safe environment due to inadequate reimbursement rates for service providers and low wages for Direct Support Personnel (DSP).

The budget introduced by the outgoing Northam administration goes part way to resolving this problem by proposing increased reimbursement rates for many DD waiver services and authorizing 1200 new DD waivers over the next two fiscal years. Read the proposed budget [here](#). The Senate and House of Delegates are currently in the process of amending the Northam Introduced Budget. Read the amendments [here](#).

While all items in the **DD System Rescue Plan** (see Part 1 above) are important, two amendments are critical:

1. **Item #304 31s** would increase waiver rates above the rates included in the Introduced Budget; add increases for Group Day and Group Employment Support services (not in the Introduced Budget); and make the Supported Living rate equivalent to the Small Group Home rate. **The rate structure is of paramount importance to prevent total collapse of the DD system.** Currently there is insufficient capacity to serve those with waivers. Competitive pay rates at the 75th percentile will increase both capacity and quality of services for individuals with DD.
2. **Item #304 52h** would fund a much needed study to create a 1915k waiver of services for individuals who are on the DD Wait List. This new waiver would offer select essential services and supports to individuals before they might require a more comprehensive waiver.

The next milestone in developing the FY23/24 budget is **Sunday, February 20th** when the House Appropriations and the Senate Finance Committees "Report Out" amendments to be voted on by their respective chambers. The full Senate and House will vote on the proposals on **Thursday, February 24th**.

Please read Part 3 below to find out how to **Take Action before February 20th!**
Questions? Please [email CRAAG](#).

Part 3: Take Action Before February 20th!

CRAAG encourages all of our readers to email the members of the **House Appropriations and Senate Finance Committees** in support of the **DD System Rescue Plan before Sunday, February 20th!**

It's easy. Copy and paste the sample letter below, personalize it (or not), add the email addresses listed below, and send your email to the whole group. Your Delegate or Senator may not be a member of these committees, but that is not a concern. Only a small number of legislators participate in these "money committees."

Sample Email

Subject: VOTE YES on the DD System Rescue Plan (Patrons Senator Hanger and Delegates Sickles and Gooditis), especially Item #304 31s and #304 52h

Dear Delegates/Senators,

I am a supporter of the **DD System Rescue Plan** proposed by The Arc of Virginia and vaAccess with Patrons Senator Hanger and Delegates Sickles and Gooditis. I am writing to you to urge you to **VOTE YES** on the **DD System Rescue Plan**.

This is important to me because _____ (add your reasons) _____.

While all items of the **Rescue Plan** are important, two amendments are critical:

1) **Item #304 31s** would increase waiver rates above the rates included in the Introduced Budget; add increases for Group Day and Group Employment Support services (not in the Introduced Budget); and make the Supported Living rate equivalent to the Small Group Home rate. **The rate structure is of paramount importance to prevent total collapse of the DD system.** Currently there is insufficient capacity to serve those with waivers. Competitive pay rates at the 75th percentile will increase both capacity and quality of services for individuals with DD.

2) **Item #304 52h** would fund a much needed study to create a 1915k waiver of services for individuals who are on the DD Wait List. This new waiver would offer select essential services and supports to individuals before they might require a more comprehensive waiver.

Your support for the **DD System Rescue Plan** will be very much appreciated by the many thousands of families across the Commonwealth who are concerned about the future of their loved ones with DD.

Sincerely,
Your Name

House Appropriations and Senate Finance Committee Members

Email Addresses for the Whole Group (Copy and Paste)

DelBKnight@house.virginia.gov, DelTAustin@house.virginia.gov
DelJMorefield@house.virginia.gov, DelIMFariss@house.virginia.gov
DelGDavis@house.virginia.gov, DelRBloxom@house.virginia.gov
DelEBrewer@house.virginia.gov, DelDMarshall@house.virginia.gov
DelKHodges@house.virginia.gov, DelCCoyner@house.virginia.gov
DelSWyatt@house.virginia.gov, DelWWampler@house.virginia.gov
DelLTorian@house.virginia.gov, DelMSickles@house.virginia.gov
DelKPlum@house.virginia.gov, DelDBulova@house.virginia.gov
DelBCarr@house.virginia.gov, DelDMcQuinn@house.virginia.gov
DelPKrizek@house.virginia.gov, DelCHayes@house.virginia.gov
DelDReid@house.virginia.gov, DelSRasoul@house.virginia.gov
District32@senate.virginia.gov, District24@senate.virginia.gov,
District39@senate.virginia.gov, District25@senate.virginia.gov,
District30@senate.virginia.gov, District02@senate.virginia.gov,
District18@senate.virginia.gov, District37@senate.virginia.gov,
District23@senate.virginia.gov, District09@senate.virginia.gov,
District34@senate.virginia.gov, District15@senate.virginia.gov,
District35@senate.virginia.gov, District27@senate.virginia.gov

For more ideas of how to push for this legislation, [click here](#) for The Arc of Virginia's most recent Action Alert.

Part 4: Staying Informed About the GA

Below you will find several ways to stay aware of what is going on in this incredibly important GA Session.

Sign up to receive alerts and other DD information:

- [The Arc of Virginia](#)
- [CRAAG - Charlottesville Region Autism Action Group](#)
- [Moms in Motion/At Home Your Way](#)
- [Virginia Autism Project](#)

Watch a live stream of both chambers in action:

- [House Link](#)
- [Senate Link](#)

Representation in Richmond:

- [Click here to find out who is your Delegate or Senator](#)

Names and email addresses for all
Virginia House of Delegates, Senators and Governor Youngkin

- [House of Delegates](#)
- [Senate](#)
- [Governor Glenn Youngkin](#)

**Plan to Attend Next CRAAG
Virtual Meeting on Wed. February 23rd
from 10 a.m. to 12 p.m.**

Meeting

**Use the Zoom Link Below for the Meeting!
Meeting Agenda**

1. Welcome/Introductions
2. Advocacy Update and Discussion
3. Work Group Reports
4. Provider/Agency Updates
5. Other

**Zoom Link for CRAAG Meeting
Wednesday, February 23rd
10 a.m. to 12 p.m.**

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/3713067117?>

Meeting ID: 371 306 7117

Passcode: ysA8Ji



Next Virtual Work Group Meetings

24/7 Supports Work Group

Date TBD - after the FY23/24 budget is approved

Maximizing Independence Work Group

Wednesday, February 16th and March 17th from 7 p.m. to 8:30 p.m.

Preparing for Life After High School Work Group

Thursday, February 17th from 11 a.m. to 12 p.m.

If you haven't already done so, [Join a CRAAG Work Group](#) to receive the Zoom meeting link for the meetings!

Notes from the December 8th Evening CRAAG Meeting

Many thanks to the 18 family members, 4 professionals who attended the evening Zoom meeting. The following organizations were represented at the meeting: CA Human Services, Region Ten CSB, and DARS.

The meeting was held to review CRAAG's 2021 accomplishments and look forward to our 2022 agenda. [Read the slides here.](#)

[More >](#)

Connect Engage

Learn & Change

Read through to the end of the article to find important calendar events and information!

Partner Updates A - Z

ALBEMARLE COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS' PARENT RESOURCE CENTER is ACPS's local effort to link families, schools and communities together to better support children with disabilities in the school setting. The ACPS *Parent Resource Center* has a goal of

[More >](#)

Spotlight on Housing, Supports and Service Needs



This month we spotlight the *National Autism Indicators (NAI) Report: Family Perspectives on Services and Supports*. [Read the report here.](#)

Dr. Rose Nevill of the UVA STAR shared this report with CRAAG. In 2021, UVA STAR and CRAAG partnered to publish *Housing, Supports, and Service Needs of Adults with Developmental Disabilities: State of Need in Central Virginia* based on the results of a CRAAG survey of DD families in our region. [Read the report here.](#)

The key finding in the NAI report is "Families need more supports and services – especially respite care to allow them to recharge and meet their own needs. They need understandable information about services and adequate planning for emergencies and for the future care of the autistic adult. Families whose loved one lives with them may need financial support. And families whose loved one does not live with them need choices regarding staff when care is inadequate - to avoid abuse and neglect."

About CRAAG

CRAAG began in 2010 in collaboration with CA Human Services (formerly Commonwealth Autism). *CRAAG's mission is to raise awareness and enhance the quality of life for people with autism, developmental disabilities, and their families in Charlottesville City, Albemarle, Greene, Fluvanna, Louisa and Nelson counties.* We are a volunteer action group for families, self-advocates, and professionals who are interested in all age groups and levels of need. The daily concerns of CRAAG's active volunteers inform our focus on the needs of students transitioning out of high school, adults throughout the lifespan, and their families. Our advocacy is person-centered aimed at maximizing independent living with supports; meaningful employment; social connectivity; and community engagement. CRAAG's 2021 Housing survey initiated a years-long

initiative in our region to expand the number of housing options, supports and services available to meet the needs of adults with developmental disabilities.

[Email CRAAG](#) | [CRAAG Webpage](#) | [Join Email List or a Work Group](#)