



*Changing lives, changing minds*



# 2026 Full Advocacy Agenda



Harc provides support across the lifespan to people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD). We proudly serve individuals with a wide range of needs, from those requiring intensive supports to those who achieve significant independence. Through early intervention, employment and day services, community and independent living supports, recreation, respite, and aging services, Harc helps people enjoy lives of inclusion, dignity, and purpose.

## THANK YOU

We thank Connecticut legislators for the actions taken in the last session to increase support for DDS providers and to stabilize community services for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Those budgetary steps, including the state's commitment to implement a provider COLA beginning with the next biennial budget, are already helping to strengthen services across the state.

As we move into 2026, Harc asks you to build on this momentum by turning short-term investments into durable policy reforms that expand housing, employment, health access, early intervention, and workforce stability for people with I/DD.

## VISION

Imagine a community where every person with intellectual and developmental disabilities has equal access to housing, employment, and healthcare, fostering independence, dignity, and opportunity across the lifespan.

## FEDERAL CONTEXT THAT MATTERS FOR CONNECTICUT



Medicaid and Home- and Community-Based Services (HCBS) developments at the federal level continue to influence state budgets and program design. Federal policy shifts could affect Medicaid financing, HCBS eligibility, and workforce incentives.

Federal proposals that recognize the unique needs of people with I/DD or expand HCBS funding would strengthen Connecticut's efforts. Conversely, uncertainty at the federal level increases the importance of predictable state policy and stable funding.

# OUR ADVOCACY PRIORITIES

## PROTECT FUNDING INCREASES AND APPROPRIATE AN ADDITIONAL \$155M FOR COMMUNITY SERVICES IN FY27



- ✓ **Legislative Ask:** In collaboration with the [CT NonProfit Alliance](#), protect funding increases approved in the enacted budget and appropriate an additional \$155 million for community services in FY27. With this funding, the state can: Give all community services the same increase that the enacted budget provides to DDS residential programs in FY27. Fully fund the Medicaid rate increases for behavioral health services recommended by the state's rate study, which showed CT is spending less than half of what it should to keep up with comparable states. Increase Room & Board rates for DDS residential programs.
- ✓ **Impact:** Stabilizes and appropriately funds the community nonprofit network to prevent service disruption and support all individual needs.

## ESTABLISH COST-BASED RATES IN LAW AND PROTECT THE CPI-LINKED COLA



- ✓ **Legislative Ask:** Establish in law a cost-based rate methodology for DDS-contracted services and formally adopt the Consumer Price Index-linked COLA scheduled to begin with the next biennial budget. Require that the COLA be maintained in statute to ensure predictability and continuity across budget cycles. Require annual reporting to the Appropriations Committee on rate adequacy, COLA implementation, and any deviations from the established methodology.
- ✓ **Impact:** Creates predictable, sustainable funding, reduces service disruptions, and helps providers plan responsibly for staffing and program needs.



## CREATE A CONNECTICUT HCBS STABILIZATION FUND

- ✓ **Legislative Ask:** Establish a dedicated HCBS Stabilization Fund to provide bridge grants for workforce recruitment and retention, emergency provider support, and targeted investments in training and assistive technology. Define governance, eligible uses, and a biennial appropriation mechanism.
- ✓ **Impact:** Provides short-term flexibility to respond to provider crises while longer-term rate reforms take hold.



## EXPAND WAIVER CAPACITY AND IMPROVE TRANSPARENCY

- ✓ **Legislative Ask:** Set a phased target to increase Medicaid waiver slots and require DDS to publish quarterly waitlist, placement, and utilization data. Require an annual plan to reduce wait times.
- ✓ **Impact:** Reduces waiting lists, improves family planning, and increases accountability.

## APPROPRIATE COMPENSATION FOR STAFF SUPPORTING INDIVIDUALS

### WITH COMPLEX NEEDS



✓ **Legislative Ask:** Fund enhanced wages, specialty pay differentials, and professional development for Direct Support Professionals who support individuals with complex needs, including profound autism, medical fragility, dementia, and significant behavioral or psychiatric challenges. Recognize Direct Support Professionals as a distinct human services profession and support career ladders, credentialing, and specialty roles.

✓ **Impact:** Improves safety, retention, and quality of care while aligning compensation with skill, responsibility, and physical demands.

## ACCESSIBLE HOUSING AND ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY TRUST



✓ **Legislative Ask:** Create an Accessible Housing Trust to fund adaptive home modifications, SMART technology, remote monitoring, and digital health supports, and to provide incentives for developers to build accessible units.

Include matching funds and priority criteria for individuals transitioning from institutional or higher-acuity settings.

✓ **Impact:** Expands independent living options, extends workforce capacity through technology, and reduces pressure on residential systems.

## EMPLOYER INCENTIVE AND JOB COACHING PROGRAM



✓ **Legislative Ask:** Authorize a state tax credit or wage subsidy for small and medium-sized employers that hire people with I/DD into employment positions, paired with state-funded job coaching and placement grants administered through DDS or a designated workforce agency.

✓ **Impact:** Encourages employment and supports sustainable employer partnerships.

## MEDICALLY SUPPORTED COMMUNITY-BASED CLAS FOR AGING ADULTS WITH I/DD



✓ **Legislative Ask:** Authorize and fund a limited number of medically supported, community-based Community Living Arrangements (CLAs) for aging adults with I/DD who require ongoing nursing care, dementia supports, or complex medical oversight. These CLAs should remain small in scale, fully integrated into local communities, and designed to allow individuals to age in place within the existing DDS residential system. Include a pilot phase with geographic diversity and required outcome reporting to the General Assembly.

✓ **Impact:** Allows individuals to age safely within familiar community-based CLAs, prevents inappropriate nursing home placements, reduces hospitalizations, and provides families with humane, realistic options as needs change.

# HEALTHCARE COMPETENCY AND ACCESSIBILITY REQUIREMENTS



- ✓ **Legislative Ask:** Require Medicaid-participating healthcare providers to complete regular I/DD and autism competency training as a condition of state contracting. Create a grant program to equip medical practices with accessible exam rooms and adaptive equipment.
- ✓ **Impact:** Improves health outcomes, reduces avoidable hospitalizations, and ensures providers can meet the needs of people with significant physical disabilities.

## WORKFORCE PIPELINE AND PROFESSIONAL PAY ALIGNMENT



- ✓ **Legislative Ask:** Fund targeted scholarships, loan repayment, apprenticeships, and clinical training programs for critical HCBS professions, including Direct Support Professionals, nurses, occupational and physical therapists, and behavioral support staff. Require a biennial review of wage parity relative to market demand.
- ✓ **Impact:** Strengthens recruitment and retention and aligns public investment with workforce realities.

## BIRTH TO THREE: PROTECT GAP PAYMENTS AND ENSURE RATE ADEQUACY



- ✓ **Legislative Ask:** Preserve the Birth-to-Three General Administrative Payment (GAP) in statute as a separate and protected funding line. Direct the Office of Early Childhood to implement provider reimbursement rates aligned with the most recent Birth-to-Three cost study to reflect the true cost of delivering services and sustaining a licensed and credentialed early intervention workforce. Require ongoing, periodic rate reviews to prevent erosion of purchasing power, support workforce retention, and ensure timely access to services for eligible children and families.
- ✓ **Impact:** Prevents service disruptions, stabilizes the early intervention workforce, and ensures infants and toddlers receive timely, high-quality supports during critical developmental years.

## CALL TO ACTION

We ask state legislators to sponsor and advance these measures in the 2026 session so Connecticut can convert recent budgetary gains into durable policy reforms. These steps will help ensure that people with I/DD have access to early intervention, safe housing, meaningful employment, quality healthcare, and a stable workforce across the lifespan.

For more information, contact Marian Leist: [mleist@harc-ct.org](mailto:mleist@harc-ct.org) | 860. 218.6079