

## Transcript

>> NICOLE JORWIC: All right, well, why don't we get started? Hi everyone, my name is Nicole Jorwic. I'm the Senior Director of Public Policy for The Arc of the United States and I wanted to be the first to welcome you to our Policy and Advocacy and Communications Kickoff Webinar for the new Congress and for the new year. And next slide we'll go through the introductions. I already introduced myself. I am joined by Claire Manning, our Senior Director of Advocacy and Mobilization and Kristin Wright, our Director of Communications.

I'm very excited to be joined by them both so that you can hear from all of us. Next slide to do some housekeeping. This webinar is in listen and view only mode. This means that you cannot unmute yourselves or turn on your video, it will also be closed captioned. To turn on closed captions on your desktop or laptop, go to the meeting controls at the bottom of the screen and click on live transcript, select show subtitle and the captions will appear on your screen.

If the captions are too small, you can resize them by clicking on the live transcript button and selecting the subtitle settings. If you join the webinar using your phone or your iPad, you can turn on closed captions by going into more then to meeting settings. At any time during the webinar you will have the opportunity to submit your questions to today's presenters, that is myself, Claire, and Kristin. To do so, just type your question into the Q and A which can be found at the bottom of the Zoom screen.

As time allows, the presenters will address as many questions as we can. Obviously, I see a lot of folks in the chatbox saying, hello, and that's great. Just as a reminder, for questions please use Q and A so that I can forward

and take a look at those so that I can forward them to the right person when we're asking the questions, when we get to the Q and A part.

Last but not least, we will be recording this webinar and we'll share the link after the event. Next slide.

So, I am going to do a brief policy update and overview. We really couldn't have timed this webinar more perfectly because just today, a lot of exciting things have happened and we're getting some information.

First, as I'm sure people are aware from the media, the Senate in the 117th Congress is split 50/50 with Vice President Harris being the tie-breaking vote. Even though Congress has been sworn in for over a month, just today, earlier this morning, that was when the cooperating agreement between the two sides, between majority leader Schumer and leader McConnell, reached its final steps.

A big thing that we've been looking out for when it comes to the cooperating agreement is around who is going to be on what committees and who will be in leading those committees. And the Democrats will hold leadership roles in the committees. When we talk about committees, why does that matter? Committees is where a lot of the drafting for legislation and a lot of the work gets done on specific issue areas. Some key committees that all of us should be thinking about and that the policy staff at The Arc work most frequently with, although the policy staff at The Arc work with every committee in Congress, are in Senate.

It's the Senate finance committee and that's the committee that oversees Medicaid spending and the Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee or the HELP Committee. That's where we deal with workforce issues, education and other labor and employment issues. On the house side, it doesn't really make sense by the name, but the committee that we

focus on the most in terms of Medicaid is energy and commerce, that's who oversees the Medicaid spending, so it's the counterpart to Senate finance and the house at end labor committee, which is where those same education and workforce issues sit within.

The top priority going forward is going to be COVID relief which is no surprise, I'm sure to most folks as the pandemic continues on, but what's happening in Congress is that COVID relief is being pursued on two fronts. On the one side you have--a couple of weeks ago President Biden released his \$1.9 trillion American Rescue Plan. This is a plan to do things like getting more funding for vaccine distribution, but it also is a big package that includes stimulus payments and it also includes more unemployment supports.

And so we have been in touch with the administration about their proposals. The administration is working on getting bi-partisan support for some of their proposals, and then in addition there is a group of 10 Republican senators that also introduced their own \$620 trillion plan and then those senators did meet with the vice president. So that bi-partisan work continues and we obviously have been putting forward our thoughts. Unfortunately, the \$1.9 trillion plan from President Biden did not include, for example the dedicated HCBS Funding.

And so then that's our job then to turn to the Congress and we have been doing that. So on a parallel track, there's also what's going to be-- what most likely will be a partisan route. So it will be mostly Democrats that's working on a process called budget reconciliation. Now, I'm not going to go through the whole budget reconciliation process because it's very complex and frankly, I could talk just for an hour about the budget reconciliation process and probably end up confusing myself, but I will talk about it really quickly. If it sounds familiar, the budget reconciliation process was the

process that at that time Republicans had the majority in the House and in the Senate.

So, this can only be pursued if there's a majority in both the House and Senate. And because Vice President Harris there is a majority, the Democrats can use this vehicle. In 2017, the budget reconciliation process was the process that was used to attempt to repeal the Affordable Care Act and also include all those big budget cuts to Medicaid to fund the repeal of the Affordable Care Act. The positive thing is that the Medicaid can be part of the budget reconciliation process. So, that's just something to keep in mind, but it is a process that again, will be pretty partisan.

Everything is in the budget reconciliation instruction. So, what happens is the Congress passes instructions to go to those committees, not just the committees I mentioned all the committees and the budget instructions set a top line or a top number that each committee can spend on issues in their committee's jurisdiction or in the roles of the committee. The budget reconciliation instructions are very focused on COVID and it can be the vehicle for what the key components of vice, or excuse me, President Biden's rescue plan, but that's if bi-partisan talks fail.

They had to start this process because the process takes a while, so I know that we're getting very clear messaging and real messaging from the administration that just because this process has started does not mean that they've given up on talks on a bi-partisan relief package, but they also do want this package to be wrapped up by mid March which is when the current unemployment benefits expire from the last release bill in December. So we're happy to see both processes started so that we can move forward.

Another big piece of news that we just found out today is that in the budget instructions on the Senate side, that there's a specific earmark for 10 point,

excuse me, \$9.7 billion for home and community-based services, which is very exciting because if you've heard me talk in the last year I have been talking about how in every package we have not seen this dedicated funding. So, 9.7 billion is a little bit less than what we were hoping for. What we are hoping is 13.6, a 10 point almost \$10 billion almost \$10 billion dollar shot in the arm for Medicaid, State Medicaid Home and Community Based Service Systems would be extremely helpful. So we'll obviously continue to push to hope it stays but it's really important and I want to be really clear that just because it's in the instructions does not mean that it's going to stay in and so now our job is to continue to push to make sure that it does stay in. Next slide.

A new Congress and president obviously took oath last month with a full slate of issues on the agenda. And as I've talked about, COVID is going to be the priority. While managing the COVID response will be the top priority, we're also expecting Congress to focus heavily on healthcare. Additionally, we're looking at some workforce issues. And so that is what we will anticipate seeing. There's also expected to be a second budget reconciliation package and that's where we might see some bigger pieces, but I will turn to that in a second. Next slide.

So, the congressional to-do list right now, this slide I made about a week ago. And so a couple of these things have been worked out including the cooperating agreement. The congressional nominations continues to move forward. Just yesterday, the new secretary of transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg was just sworn in. We're also watching really closely, waiting for the Health and Human Services secretary. The secretary designate is Secretary Bissera because he's the one who will be overseeing the agency that looks at Medicaid funding. And so we're really going to be watching that very closely. Obviously the impeachment trial in the Senate is

expected to begin next week, so that may slow things down, but those are some things to think about. Next slide.

So when I break things down, I really think about things from a short-term, long-term perspective. We obviously have our COVID priorities. We want to make sure that those are getting into the COVID rescue package and to the point I was making earlier, stay in the COVID rescue package. Again, we're still unclear on what the process will be, but we really do continue the need to act. It does include the rescue package from President Biden, did include stimulus payments that includes adult dependents. So we want to make sure that that stays in as well as again, that HCBS COVID Relief Act which is that dedicated HCBS funding. Next slide.

Long-term, we're going to have a lot to do. There will be a second reconciliation package and within that package depending on how big it's going to be, we're hoping to get some other big ideas into the package. Obviously what we've seen in death and infection rates in larger congregate settings and institutions is that we really need to see a focus investment in Medicaid Home and Community Based Services. That will be the thing that we will be wanting to rally around as a community once we get the short-term pieces done and that includes waiting list issues, workforce issues.

We know that the marriage penalty issue is something that an income and asset limits, housing, IDEA, health care, the list goes on of things that we're going to work on in the longterm, but we will be trying to get as much of that into whatever packages are moving because obviously we know how long that's been since real support has come in. So we have a lot of work to do, and which is why it's really important to really make sure that all of us at the national office are doing what we need to do and also that everyone and

local chapters and state chapters and self advocates are also doing things to help make, or frankly, make our jobs a little easier.

And one of those things in the next slide is really making sure that we are building relationships with those legislators and that we're reaching out to new legislators, that we're reconnecting with representatives and senators. The virtual platform actually does provide some unique experiences. Maybe it was more difficult to get legislators to visit a chapter or to visit a program, but this could be an opportunity to do that.

It's really important at the federal level that you know committee assignments. So I just mentioned that all the committee assignments came out yesterday. Actually I will be sending those around to folks within the chapter network and it's important to know what committees your representative and senators are on. Staff level relationships are obviously key both in the DC offices but also at the district and state level. It's really important to make consistent contact and not just when you need something.

You don't want to only be reaching out when you need something, you also want to be positioning yourself as the subject matter expert. You want to be reaching out to share good things or new and innovative things that you'd like to maybe see get supported down the road, but that doesn't mean that that should be the first ask that's coming in. Awards and recognition go a long way.

It's also important to utilize social media when you're--you can share--. We have our action alerts that Claire will be talking about. There's a way to really make sure that you're also connecting on social media. Finding that personal connection, you never know who has a family member with a disability or who's a family caregiver, and always look for those opportunities to create buy-in, do your homework, which I know our

chapters are great at doing, but all this is really important because all of these personal relationships and the background knowledge that you can have and give to these legislators help make our advocacy easier which is exactly where I will turn it over to Claire. Thanks.

>> CLAIRE MANNING: Thanks, Nicole and good afternoon everyone. Thank you so much for being with us here today. I'm Claire Manning, I'm the Senior Director of Advocacy and Mobilization. I want to welcome everybody to our 2021 kickoff webinar. I think we're a month in, but it feels like it's already been a very long year. I'm sure many of you feel that way as well. And I'm going to piggyback here off of the policy updates and issues that Nicole discussed to talk about the grassroots advocacy updates and kind of actions and opportunities around those policy issues.

So first up, as Nicole mentioned and probably not a surprise to anybody on this call, but we are push, push, pushing on our COVID-19 advocacy alerts. We have two alerts. One is share your story alert that after answering a few different questions helps people kind of come up with their own personalized message to Congress about what is most important to them to see in the COVID relief packages really regardless of the vehicle. And the second is a call, email or tweet.

You can choose your own adventure or in an ideal world, do all three opportunity to contact your members of Congress and when you use the link, there are sample messages and talking points and all of those things. So you can add your own information, but you never have to really reinvent the wheel or start from scratch. Both of these alerts are updated. We are asking everyone to push them out. We know that you spent a lot of time and energy pushing them out in 2020. We know that because almost 175,000 people across The Arc's network from chapters to advocates, people with disabilities, family members took action and we had that many

calls, emails, and tweets to Congress which is just absolutely incredible and really shows the power of our network. I think the challenge is now we have to keep it up.

As Nicole mentioned, there's some potential good news around HCBS Funding and we need to fight to keep that in. So, I feel like in a lot of ways the work has been going on but really starts now. As I mentioned, these are updated. So even if somebody has filled it out in the past, that's okay, they should do it again, they should do all of the actions. You can take really all four, if you'd like. There's different--all of them are important and impactful in their own ways. So please continue to push out these action alerts.

I also want to remind everyone that we have a toolkit for COVID-19 advocacy. Nicole, I believe is actually going to drop a link to it-- She just did, thank you--into the chat and that is Dropbox. In that link, you'll find sample letters to the editor, you'll find sample social media graphics probably about a dozen, some that have people's personal stories, some that kind of just talk about the issues in general, things that we need to see in the bill as a community and some sample social media messaging that of course you can kind of update and then plug and play with any of these different alerts. So, hopefully that is helpful.

I know people have been pushing them out for the last year, but please continue to do so. We're really ramping up. Now is the time. That's number one. The next thing I want to mention as we think about kind of level setting for the year for 2021. what is our advocacy going to look like? I wanted to share that we have a new action center. It's called [thearc.org/action](https://thearc.org/action). You can always go here if you're thinking to yourself like, where are those action alerts that Claire just mentioned or where can I find the latest kind of advocacy issues that The Arc is working on? You can always go to this website, [thearc.org/action](https://thearc.org/action) and find them here. You can also sign up, there's

a signup in the right-hand corner to receive action alerts or every Monday Capitol Insider newsletter to really get kind of the latest on what's going on in Capitol Hill or with federal advocacy in general. And you can also look up your legislators.

Another kind of hot tip that I want to mention about this site is that if you are managing the social media account for your chapter, this is great content. If you ever have a day where you don't have something to post, you can always, and you've already posted the COVID action alert a bunch of times by the way, but you can always grab this and plug it in and say something on your pages like, looking for new ways to take action with The Arc, or want to learn more about advocacy, check out this action center from The Arc of the United States. So, just a tip in case that is helpful.

Speaking of social media, we have our hashtag WeActWednesday campaign. This has been going on since 2017. We have only missed, I believe three days since 2017 and all of them have been on purpose. And so, what this is is every week, every Wednesday we post a new way to take action with The Arc. Sometimes it's something like reading an article that just came out about an important issue to people with disabilities or in the disability community. And most often it's one of our action alerts.

You can see here as a recent sample from the middle of January where we posted part of our WeAreEssential campaign related to COVID, but I just wanted to remind folks about this because this is again, content that you have every Wednesday but also something that we are asking our chapters and our advocates to help us to promote, to push out to your networks, to share, to make sure that we are really amplifying this and kind of speaking with a united message around our advocacy.

I am excited to share that in 2021, we have some new resources that are currently being developed to support you all with your advocacy work.

Nicole mentioned that there has been, and there will continue to be, a big push around Medicaid Home and Community Based Services, making sure that we are significantly increasing resources and finding solutions to issues related to that. And so along those lines, we are developing a home and community-based services advocacy toolkit and really a campaign kind of an education campaign to go along with it because it's very clear that not many people in the general public legislators even in our own community don't necessarily understand everything about HCBS and all of the issues.

So, we're going to be putting together a webpage. We are going to have a hashtag to kind of brand the campaign, we're making several videos an HCBS kind of one-on-one explainer, more kind of personal story style videos, talking about individuals who are on a wait list. We're going to be putting together social media graphics, fact sheets in plain language and Spanish and English. And I think that might be about it. Or probably also some press materials to support chapters and advocates in their work. All of this is going to be rolled out in waves with kind of the first batch coming in the first quarter, probably the end of first quarter of 2021. So, just probably a few weeks or about a month from now. So please stay tuned for that, but hopefully that is some good and exciting news.

And the last thing that I want to mention here as we think about different ways to engage with The Arc this year is to please join and promote our councils. The Arc has three different councils that are really part of the leadership of our organization. They guide, support and promote our advocacy, provide feedback on programs and issues and there's slightly different ways to get involved in each of them. So, I'm going to walk you kind of through that now and then also share the contact information for the staff member who runs East of those councils for any follow-up.

So, the first is our National Council of Self-Advocates. So, there's two ways to participate in that council. The first is as an officer and we are actually taking applications for new officers right now for this two-year cycle and those applications are due February 5th. So, if you are an amazing self advocate or you know somebody who is, please reach out to Jenny Alexander at [alexander@thearc.org](mailto:alexander@thearc.org) to get those applications in. And you could also, if you miss that deadline or maybe just want to kind of like learn about the council before becoming an officer, there's a general membership and that is ongoing you can join at any time if you are a self advocate and there's no application for that.

We also have our National Sibling Council, so this is for siblings. And for that council, it's structured also a little bit differently. We have council members and the application to be a council member is also due February 5th. For the application or any questions, you can reach out to Liz Mahar at [mahar@thearc.org](mailto:mahar@thearc.org). And then the Sibling Council also has a quarterly newsletter that is just directed for siblings, it's wonderful. And of course, you can join that list. There's no obligation to be part of that, but you can reach out to Liz for more information.

And last, but definitely not least we have a brand new, well, pretty new, I think it's been around about a year, year and a half now, new council called the Alumni Council. So The Arc has this incredible network all across the country of staff, board members and we want to make sure that as people leave our network, we are holding onto them basically and not losing that knowledge and that expertise and that experience. So, the Alumni Council was formed as a way for people kind of cycling out of maybe their official role with The Arc, but are able to stay on in this council capacity. There is no application to be a part of that if you would like to join or you would like to share that information with someone and one want a little bit more info, feel free to reach out to Marty Ford at [ford@thearc.org](mailto:ford@thearc.org).

I am now going to turn it over to my colleague, Kristin Wright. She is our Director of Communications and she is going to talk to us about the power of stories. I think anyone who's ever heard me present shares that I really believe that stories are one of the most powerful advocacy tools that we have. So, she is going to give some tips for chapters on working with storytellers and also for individuals on sharing their stories, Kristin.

>> KRISTIN WRIGHT: Hey, thank you, Claire. So yes, storytelling is absolutely a tool. And I think of it as a way to connect with entire communities, broad swaths of the places where we live. And so that means people inside and outside of the disability community and all of us here know that that is really important to make those connections, right? With people who we may not otherwise make those connections with. And so we believe that it's a way--storytelling is a way to further our common goals of advancing the human rights of people with IDD and making sure that equity and compassion are always at the forefront. And so I was a reporter for a long time, almost 20 years before I joined The Arc, and I kind of deliver this advice to you from that perspective and from my own personal experience.

So, I wanted to start with relationship building and as Nicole was speaking earlier, I thought about how there are actually a lot of similarities, a lot of overlap between the way that--it's probably smart to approach your interactions with legislators. I mean, it's different, but there are some similarities in the way you might think about approaching your interactions with legislators and the way that you think about approaching your interactions with journalists. And again, totally different but there's some overlap there.

And so I wanted to start with relationship building and leveraging news coverage from 2020. And I say that because, really as a result of the pandemic, journalists, we've found paid so much more attention to the

disability community than they had in a long while, right? In a few years. And so my advice to you is really to go back to 2020 not that long ago, a few weeks ago and really take the time to Google search, look at newspaper websites, search the term I say, disability on the websites, and look for themes that you might see like what did they cover, what did they not cover? Reporters and newsrooms from my experience do really like to do follow-ups and I think sometimes the time is limited and they don't always follow through. But I think if we're proactive in trying to make those things happen, then I think there are opportunities there. And so think about 2020. Think about what you find when you do those searches and ask yourself is there a follow-up in 2020, sorry, in 2021? And there probably is. Next slide. Sorry, that was not next slide, this is the first slide still.

But you want to research journalists and by that I mean, be selective. Go on media websites and figure out who has covered our issues before and who has done it well. You don't just want to sort of think about anyone or target anyone, you want to really hone in on those journalists who have covered our issues before, but also done it well. And that's not an easy thing to do. Who tends to report in general. Whether it's a story about disability or whether it was a story about something completely different, who tends to report with empathy and compassion? And I think those are two really important things for us because much of what we do and our mission really it's about being a human being.

So I think that if you really look at the reporters who have done well in reporting with empathy and compassion, whether it's a story about a fire down the street, we're talking more local news. So a fire down the street or if it's a story about the latest budget. Whatever it may be, you really want to look for those reporters who've reported in that fashion and you want to also think about reporters who seem approachable, right? And who seems to be a good writer. I think writing is really important and I think for our

advocacy, I think when you find someone, reporter who, or not just reporter, producer, editor who is able to communicate in a way that you feel is effective, like that's important, that's really important. Okay, next slide now. Sorry, that was my fault.

So pitching stories and ideas. You want to be persistent and that's important because I know from personal experience that journalists are often like really busy, really busy. And this is--I mean, all of us are, right? It's not really just journalists, all of us are very busy and think about how many times you've received an email and it might've slipped under the radar. Might've completely slipped under the radar because you've got so many things going on both in your professional, personal lives which for many of us really overlap.

So, you got so much going on you might forget all about whatever email. So that's why I say it's really important to be persistent. And to remember to follow up if you can and just remember that after you make that connection with a journalist, meaning a reporter, a producer, an editor, whoever that might be, the assignment desk whenever you make that connection, I would encourage you to just keep in touch. Whether that's to say happy New Year or to say that I read, saw or heard on the radio your story on the city's new budget. It was very interesting, this is what I thought. Those things I think are valuable and those interactions I think are valuable and they're important in terms of furthering our own communications with journalists wherever you live in any part of the country.

Lastly, I think it is important to extend invitations when appropriate to journalists to speak and MC at events which are likely virtual for the time being. But I think it is a really a good way to build relationships and also educate. And that is up here, that's so important. But so critical in educating journalists about our issues. And I think back to some of the events that I

was invited as a journalist to MC, and it might've been something a nonprofit that I knew nothing about, but once they asked me if I can come speak and I came, it really opens the door and I felt in those situations that I learned so much about something that I might not have otherwise given the time to really think about. And so I encourage you to extend those invitations even if they're virtual because I know we're living in a different world now, but I would encourage you to extend those invitations even if it's something, coffee. I mean, something very simple. I think people are really receptive. I think journalists are receptive to those types of invitations and if they can find the time, then I think it's a great opportunity to really make those connections and educate as well.

So pitching to local media, I think that it's important to pitch stories that are about people. And I think it's important to send short, short personalized emails. And I think it's relatively easy to find reporter email addresses online these days. I think they're often on the websites of the outlets where they work sometimes or you'll find email on their Twitter bio and I guess I just want to stress that I don't think it's always very necessary to put together a major press release because that takes a lot of time. It takes a lot of resources and we don't always have that.

So, I think it is important to remember that you don't always have to do that and that a story pitch really can be as simple as one paragraph, one paragraph email, a casual note just saying what the story is about, what you think is important because I think reporters like the rest of us are quite busy and if time doesn't permit on your end for the big rollout of things, I would be perfectly comfortable-- I think it makes total sense to just send a short note. I think shorter is better and I also think it's good to look for a timely ideas.

And I have a couple of examples of that if this helps. For example, this summer there's a heat wave, right? There's always a heat wave no matter where we live and so, you think about local TV news can't stop talking about the heat. They're looking for ways to tell the same old story again and again and so maybe you want to pitch how it's too hot for some of our people to venture outside, but staying inside is a disruption to routine. And so that presents this big challenge, right? So that's one story. A huge earthquake, here's another example.

There's a huge earthquake out West and so you pitch emergency preparedness. You pitch the idea of emergency preparedness for our folks. And so these were very kind of simple story ideas that may seem of little consequence on some level, but I do think there are good ways to help establish relationships, right? And then the next time you do the story on emergency preparedness or heat and then the next time you pitch something that may feel more substantive for you whether that's like state funding or whatever it may be.

So sharing a story, I want to end with this. It's important. The why should I care question I think is super important to think about because as a reporter who's been in several newsrooms, I can tell you that's a question that is--those words are raised in morning editorial meetings. It's, why should I care? And so I think that when you're getting into an interview, if you're doing an interview, that's what you should think about is why should I care and why should people care? And if you answer that question, I think you've really got it.

So I think it's important to deliver emotion and facts are obviously critical. Facts are very important, but I also think you should think about trying to deliver information like numbers and data possibly outside of the interview if possible. I think the interview is more of the why should I care? And I

think emotion equals connection, not tears. I'm not saying tears and things of that nature necessarily, but just to be human. Find what's in your heart and express that.

And lastly, keep it simple. You want to speak in usable short sound bites and quotes to maximize impact and also maximize the likelihood that what you say which is important will be included, right? In the story. And so none of that is easy to do.

And so myself and Kristen McKiernan, who leads our communications team and marketing team as well, we're always here and we're always happy to work with you, help you come up with talking points, anything you need. So we're always here for you and I think another-- I'll leave you with this.

The last thing is I think it's important to get back to journalists quickly because they're all often on crazy deadlines. So it's always good to get back to them quickly and be responsive even if you feel like you have nothing to add or share, but just be responsive and I think time is of the essence. And if you want to keep that contact and build it, it really is important to not leave people hanging. And so I encourage you to always respond and reach out to us if you need help. So that's all, thank you.

>> NICOLE JORWIC: Thanks Kristin. And now we can go to the next slide and start some of the questions that we've gotten from folks. I think that's the next slide. Great, so first I saw Meg's-- Meg Cooch from The Arc of Illinois question in the chatbox around how the HCBS Funding was going to be kind of how it was structured. It is not permanent reauthorization of the Money Follows the Person program. We got three year reauthorization of Money Follows the Person program in the end of the year funding bill. So MFP for a minute is going to be off the table, which for folks that have heard me talking about it for five years are probably happy about, but the

way the form that the dedicated HCBS money is in is in a dedicated FMAP or Federal Matching Percentage for the states.

So the 9.7 billion isn't as much as what the 10% matches. The 10% match, we know that total is 13.6 and that's for one additional year of that funding. Our debt is as that it'll get dialed down to about 8% or something. But again, that funding is going to be dedicated specifically to things. The States have flexibility about how to spend the money but states can do things like support higher direct care workforce wages. They can use it to transition people out of congregate settings. There's a lot of flexibility for states, but it is in the form of that FMAP bomb. So I wanted to answer that question.

There's a question in the chatbox from Eric Rodriguez about how do we support efforts to keep HCBS Funding. So, I will actually ask Claire to talk a little bit about-- I know you talked about our action alerts and our action center, but I don't know if you want to maybe flush that out a little bit.

>> CLAIRE MANNING: Sure, so Eric I think your question came in before my presentation. So, I'm hoping now you're just like check, check, check, I have my marching orders. We mentioned the action alerts. Please we're asking folks to push them out to whatever email listservs that you have at your organization, share them on your social media. If you are doing virtual Zoom meetings as an organization, maybe your self advocacy group walk people how to do the action alert on those and then maybe pause the meeting for a second and everyone can do them themselves. We are just asking people to really push those out and get our numbers up and get in front of members of Congress as much as possible.

>> NICOLE JORWIC: Thanks, Claire. And I would add too, I know that I sent around a letter to our state and local exec listservs today. That was a letter that I drafted on behalf of some coalitions that we do, but another

thing that state level advocates can do and local advocates can do is send the letters, and you can pull the language directly, I give permission, to send those letters directly as constituents to your members of Congress particularly if you're in a state that has leadership. So in the House that's Speaker Pelosi and leader McCarthy and in the Senate, that's Senator Schumer and Senator McConnell or the committees of jurisdictions. I would really encourage you to pull those letters and do that.

There's another question around having our annual advocacy training Amy from Illinois, but I think what you're talking about is the Disability Policy Seminar and we are still planning to have it, but it's going to be an all virtual event. We will still have a lot of opportunities for training. We're going to try some really cool things like doing some of our sessions, recording them in advance so that people can, especially the beginner session so that attendees have a better baseline before we get to the in-person or not in-person, the virtual sessions during those days and we will still be having a Hill Day, a virtual Hill Day. So, we will be learning as we go, and we will be pushing out new information and the registration isn't live yet, but as soon as it is, it will be live in a couple of weeks and everyone will be getting information.

Leo and Andy both had questions around vaccine messaging or other toolkits items to prioritize caregivers and people with disabilities. That is something that we're talking about frankly because so much of that work is obviously happening at the state level. We have done things and I can put it in the chat. We've signed on to things like the AADMD vaccine allocation statements and making sure that those things are happening. But we're kind of building the tracks when we're on the train on this and I also see Andy from Maryland's question about toolkits or materials specifically for the workforce to dispel myths about vaccines.

I know that that's a major issue. We see data that only 38% of nursing home employees and only about 50% of DSPs nation wide are opting to take the vaccine even though individuals with disabilities themselves are doing that in a much higher rate. So, that is actually something that we are working on in figuring out how The Arc's voice can best be used, figuring out if there's other materials from groups like NADSP in some of the unions. So, we will be circulating that as we have it.

The next is a question for Kristin. Should we just--and this is from Joe Damiano, should we just focus on local media or national media as well?

>> KRISTIN WRIGHT: Hi, Joe. Joe and I know each other. That's a very good question and I sort of tailored what I said earlier to local media, but I don't think it has to be confined to only local media. I think that those same rules pretty much apply to national media as well. So I think a lot of our issues or a lot of the things that we prioritize as The Arc or a lot of the real life things that we see is very important. They're national, it's not just in your backyard, right? So I would encourage you to look at national media as well. And then if in our office we can support you in those efforts, we're always here. We're always here to do that and we have a lot of interactions in our office with national media. So we're here if you need that sort of backup or support. We're always here for you for that.

But I do think that everything I said applies really to both local and national. And I think that I'd say the one piece of it that might be a little bit different for local as opposed to national is making those personal connections. Sometimes it's a little bit easier, I think to make those connections with people who are in your own community. So what I said about inviting people or inviting journalists to events or virtual events or activities who are in your community is more of a local thing, but I think it really goes both ways.

>> NICOLE JORWIC: Thanks, Kristin. And I know that there's another question about the Disability Policy Seminar, which we already answered. And then I see Joe has a second question around National Convention. At this point--so for folks that aren't familiar we have typically three big events the Disability Policy Seminar, which we do in partnership with several other national organizations. And then just The Arc, we have the Summer Leadership Institute and that right now still is scheduled to be in Chicago in July, always obviously subject to change. And then we do still have the plans for the Convention in New Orleans, but again-- New Orleans New Orleans however you want to say it-- but that obviously depends on what happens with the pandemic and where things are headed.

And there's a question about during a time where everyone is hurting, how do we pitch stories about the funding for the people that we support? Obviously I'll turn that over to Kristin, but I did just want to make sure that folks have seen and I'll drop it in the chatbox. But I think focusing on the workforce angle is one that we've seen some success around because obviously that's why the WeAreEssentia-- one of the reasons that we use the WeAreEssential campaign because the workforce that supports people with disabilities has been so overlooked, but obviously also so has the service system. But I'll obviously pitch that pitch question to Kristin.

>> KRISTIN WRIGHT: Yeah, I think that that's a really good question. I think that the answer for whatever format-- things are a little bit different between I think TV, newspapers, and radio. Let's just minimize it to those three mediums. I think things are always different between the three, but the one thing that I think is consistent among the three is the strength of telling personal stories. And so I do believe that if you and between all of us here on this call, like there are thousands of personal stories to tell and I think it's just a matter of lining those things up and what I've found both as a reporter and also being as an advocate is that it really helps to be able to

just kind of hand deliver these things to journalists sometimes because then it's--on their end, they kind of appreciate your expertise, right?

And you being able to sort of hand deliver something. And then on our end, it's beneficial in that we can kind of scope out, like what do we think makes sense? What stories or what--I hate to say stories because these are real life experiences, but what things are really going to resonate with people? And so I do think that there are a lot of opportunities there. It's a matter of presenting those ideas, right? To people who are journalists, who were in media to sort of say this really reflects this issue that we're talking about. This person, this family, this individual, this child, their story really reflects this and trying to really communicate those stories. I think that is super important.

>> CLAIRE MANNING: And, yeah sorry. And just to add to that, we have like a personal story toolkit that we developed for chapters a couple of years ago that really kind of outlines a lot of what Kristin just talked about, like helping people kind of develop that story and beginning, middle and the why. So that is under chapter resources, but if you are looking forward and can't find it, feel free to send me an email at [manning@thearc.org](mailto:manning@thearc.org).

>> NICOLE JORWIC: Thanks, Claire and thanks, Kristin. And there's a question around talking about cuts or focusing on COVID and I mean, frankly, I think that because we know that there's going to be so many cuts to state budgets coming and that those cuts are going to hit Medicaid budgets the hardest, I think focusing on the cuts in compounding that with the COVID. I mean I think both and for everything because then you never know what the hook is going to-- I mean, I know from a lot of the interviews that I do myself that you just kind of throw it all at them and see what they focus on. And the unfortunate reality is that because we have so many

issues as a disability service system, that there's always plenty of things to talk about.

On that note, because we're coming up at the end, I am going to wrap up and say first, thank you to Claire and Kristin, my co-panelists and thank you to all of you for participating today. I would encourage you all-- You'll be given a survey after this and please fill out the surveys so that we can make your experience better on future webinars that we do.

I want to thank you all once again for everything that you're doing to make sure that we keep raising all the priority issues to Congress and to the new administration through all the different channels that we have, through policy and advocacy and through communications. Because that is why The Arc is so effective is because we have so many different levers to pull. And I know it certainly makes my job on the Hill a lot easier. So thank you all. Thank you, Claire and Kristin, and we will be in touch soon. Thank you.