

ATAM legislative update
Feb 3, 2023

Things are moving really fast this year, over 2,000 bills have been introduced and a handful of bills have already made it through the process and been signed by the Governor. We will see a few more shared priorities in this fast track category, but are already hearing the language “laid over for possible inclusion” in committee on bills which foreshadows that at least some of the proposals that move this year will be handled as in years past in larger Omnibus bills by topic area (Health and Human Services, Public Safety, Judiciary, Education, etc).

The Governor released his Budget on January 24 with focuses on education, children and families and equity. Legislators will sponsor pieces of the Gov budget as bills that will move through the legislative process. Although ATAM provider relief was not included in the Gov budget, his office is aware of and sympathetic to the need for relief.

At our last meeting, ATAM members approved two ATAM bills for this session: **an EIDBI emergency grant bill and an EIDBI permanent rate bill**. Both bills are still at the revisor’s office getting jacketed. Once they are jacketed (any day now), I will get author signatures and drop them so that the language can be introduced in the House and the Senate. The authors are Rep. Freiberg in the House and Senator Abeler in the Senate.

When the bills are introduced, they will assigned a bill number and referred to a Health and Human Services committee. Authors will request a committee hearing and a fiscal note on each bill and we will need to be ready with testifiers for if and when the bills get scheduled for committee hearings. We have had positive meetings with key Committee Chairs in both bodies, and are working to try and get a hearing scheduled before first deadline, March 10, 2023.

There is also a temporary rate bridge bill that is led by the Mental Health Legislative Network (MHLN – a consortium of provider agencies) and has been introduced in the House (HF 346) and Senate (SF 926). This bill includes both EIDBI and CTSS codes in the list of services that would qualify for a temporary rate increase until new rates are developed after the DHS Long Term Rate study. This bill has been referred to the HHS finance committee in each body, but the bill language has not been acted on yet.

Thank you to everyone who has reached out to legislators where your organization has a location. It has been very helpful, several have gotten meetings and/or scheduled tours with key committee members. If you have not sent letters yet, now is a great time to do so. There are many asking for money this year, many who experience workforce and financial issues, so they need to hear from you.

Thank you to those who have been **gathering parent stories**. We will want providers and parents testifying at committee hearings. Parents telling the story of the impact of lessening current treatment, not being able to access treatment or waiting too long for treatment will

resonate, especially with any legislators unsure whether this is the area to make promises (of ongoing funding).

If you have not yet reached out to parents, please reach out within your organization to find parents who will share their story, both in writing and when we need testifiers. If you identify a key parent willing to work with a group to help engage parents, please let me know.

Disability Week at the Capitol is a good opportunity for parents and providers to engage. It starts February 13, with a disability rally on February 14. Providers and parents reaching out to schedule a visit with legislators during disability week would be impactful. Please let me know if anyone wants more information about this.

Finally, if anyone is interested in volunteering to join legislative meetings or testify at hearings, please let me know.

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