

# 2019

# August Congressional Recess Toolkit



## Toolkit Materials

- Factsheets on Money Follows the Person and Community Living
- Sample letters to the editor
- Social media graphics and posts
- Links to Call your Senator Action Alert for MFP
- Links to Tweet your Senator Action Alert for MFP
- Sample questions for Town Hall events
- *Coming soon:* New advocacy videos!
- Template branded sign
- Sample media release

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## EMPOWER Care Act and Money Follows the Person

### **EMPOWER Care Act Gets Individuals with Disabilities & Seniors Back Home**

*The Empower Care Act – a bipartisan bill introduced in the Senate (S. 548) by Senators Portman (R-OH) and Cantwell (D-WA) and in the House (H.R. 1342) by Representatives Guthrie (R-KY) and Dingell (D-MI) – extends and improves the Money Follows the Person program (MFP) through 2023.* First authorized by President Bush in 2005, with strong bipartisan support, MFP helps individuals with disabilities and seniors who want to move out of nursing homes and back in their communities. MFP has assisted more than 91,000 individuals voluntarily move into a setting of their choice, and has helped 44 states improve access to community-based long term services and supports, also known as “home and community-based services” (HCBS).

### **MFP Enhances Opportunities to Live Independently and Age with Dignity**

Medicaid requires states to provide care in nursing homes, but HCBS is optional. MFP incentivizes investment in HCBS by providing federal funding for transitional services for individuals who wish to leave a nursing home or other institution. Thanks to MFP, over 91,000 seniors and people with chronic conditions and disabilities and have transitioned back into the community.

### **MFP Rebalancing Demonstration is a Success Story that Improves Quality of Life**

At the end of 2015, nearly all states had an MFP demonstration. In a 2017 evaluation, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) found strong evidence that beneficiaries’ quality of life improves when they transition from institutional long-term care to HCBS. MFP participants experienced increases across all seven quality-of-life domains measured, and the improvements were largely sustained after two years.

### **States Save with Money Follows the Person**

Providing long term care in the home costs less than institutional care. Average monthly expenses for MFP participants declined by almost 25 percent in the first year after transitioning from a nursing home to HCBS. CMS also found that MFP participants are less likely to be readmitted to institutional care than other beneficiaries who transition but do not participate in the program.

### **The EMPOWER Care Act Makes Improvements to the MFP Program**

The EMPOWER Care Act improves MFP by reducing how long someone must be in a nursing home before becoming eligible to transition -- from 90 days to 60. (The longer someone remains in a nursing home, the harder it can be for them to transition out.) The bill also enhances the reporting and accountability of MFP funding and requires the federal government to identify and share the most effective state strategies for transitioning beneficiaries from institutional to qualified community settings, including how such strategies vary for different types of beneficiaries.

**Time is running out: Short-term MFP funding to help people transition ends September 30, 2019. The House of Representatives passed a bill that includes 4.5 years of funding for Money Follows the Person in June, but the Senate must act!**

## Community Living and Medicaid

**Long Term Services and Supports:** The federal/state Medicaid program is the major – sometimes the *only* – source of funding for long term supports and services (LTSS) that many people with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities (I/DD) rely on to live in the community. This effective and cost-efficient program is vital to people with I/DD, making it possible for them to live and work among their neighbors. Proposals that cut or cap the Medicaid program disproportionately hurt people with disabilities.

Currently many states have long waiting lists for participation in Medicaid-funded community-based supports and services. Due to medical and technological advances, people have longer life expectancies and often live with aging parents. As the population ages, the need for LTSS will increase for both people with I/DD and their caregivers. To meet these growing needs Medicaid should be strengthened, and other proposals should be developed, to expand access to LTSS.

### Major Issues:

**Rebalancing:** Rebalancing of long-term supports and services (LTSS) is a broad effort by states and the federal government to provide supports and services to seniors and people with disabilities in appropriate, permanent, integrated community-based settings instead of more costly congregate institutional settings. Rebalancing continues to be a focus of federal and state governments, but additional investments and changes to the Medicaid law to remove existing institutional bias would allow investment in community services to grow. One program that has supported the rebalancing efforts of states is the Money Follows the Person (MFP) program. MFP incentivizes investment in HCBS by providing federal funding for transitional services for individuals who wish to leave a nursing home or other institution. The Disability Integration Act is another legislative proposal that would address rebalancing by removing the institutional bias and eliminating waiting lists for supports and services.

**LTSS Crisis:** Much more needs to be done to address the looming need for an affordable and accessible system of LTSS that complements the Medicaid program. People should not have to become impoverished in order to become eligible to receive needed LTSS. Finding ways to address the need for LTSS before people become impoverished can save Medicaid dollars.

### Key Takeaways:

- Medicaid provides pivotal supports and services to people with disabilities.
- Fund Money Follows the Person and other programs that build capacity for community based services.
- Continue strong implementation of the HCBS Settings Rule

## Sample Letters to the Editor

### Letter to the Editor #1

Living life in your own home is something many of us take for granted. For people with disabilities, funding a key federal program can mean the difference between being in their own home and being isolated in a nursing home.

Medicaid requires states to provide care in nursing homes, but home and community-based options are, unfortunately, optional. The federal Money Follow the Person, or MFP, program has been the solution for more than 91,000 people since its inception.

First authorized by President Bush in 2005, with strong bipartisan support, MFP helps individuals with disabilities and seniors who want to move out of nursing homes and back in their communities. It's been implemented in 44 states. But funding is running low – Congress has to act to keep the program going.

I urge INSERT NAME to support the EMPOWER Care Act and continue the commitment to life in the community for people with disabilities. We've made great progress away from institutional settings, and into the community – don't send us back.

### Letter to the Editor #2

The clock is ticking for Congress to act to renew a bipartisan, effective, and popular program that keeps people with disabilities living in the community instead of in nursing homes.

The Money Follows the Person program, or MFP, helps individuals with disabilities and seniors who want to move out of nursing homes and back in their communities. It's been implemented in 44 states, and supported more than 91,000 people since 2005.

Providing long term care in the home costs less than institutional care. Average monthly expenses for MFP participants declined by almost 25 percent in the first year after transitioning from a nursing home to a home and community based setting.

It makes sense, and it's the right thing to do. INSERT NAME, please support this important program before the funding runs out.

## Social Media Posts & Tips

### Social media Tips

- A picture is worth a thousand words - take picture at your events and post!
- Encourage your followers to follow their Member of Congress
- Use social media to ask your followers to attend events – like town halls with your chapter.
- Coming soon: In August, The Arc will have new advocacy videos available for chapters to share. Make sure you're following us on facebook.com/thearcus and twitter.com/thearcus to reshare them when they launch!

### Sample Posts: Money Follows the Person Program

*The Money Follows the Person program helps people with disabilities and seniors move home after living in a nursing home. Ask your Senator [\[insert your Senators\]](#) to support this critical program! #FundMFP*

[Link to Call Your Senators action alert](#)

*Act now! The clock is ticking for Congress to support a bipartisan, effective, and popular program that keeps people with disabilities living in the community instead of in nursing homes. #FundMF [Link to Call Your Senators action alert](#) and graphic*

*Ask Senators [\[insert Senators names\]](#) to support the EMPOWER Care Act to continue the commitment to life in the community for people with disabilities. We've made great progress away from institutional settings, and into the community – don't send us back. #FundMFP [Link to TWEET at your Senators](#)*

### General August Recess Post

*Members of Congress are home for August Congress Recess – and they need to hear from you! Attend a Townhall event and tell your elected officials about issues that are important to you.*

[Link to https://townhallproject.com/](https://townhallproject.com/)

## Social Media Graphics



The Arc.  
For people with intellectual  
and developmental disabilities

# Tell Congress: #FundMFP

CALL NOW



The Arc.  
For people with intellectual  
and developmental disabilities

# I ADVOCATE FOR....



The Arc.

# CONGRESSIONAL RECESS HOMEWORK

## Action Alerts

Use the links below in your emails, social media posts, other outreach to direct advocates to contact their Members of Congress to support the Money Follows the Person program.



[Call Your Senator](#)



[Tweet Your Senator](#)

## Coming soon: More Advocacy Videos!

There are many advocacy videos available for chapters to use on [The Arc's youtube page](#). This August we will also be releasing a several new videos, including on meeting with Members of Congress and supporting Direct Support Professionals – so stay tuned!



## Sample Questions for Town Hall Events

[I/my loved one], like many people with disabilities, need[s] long term services and supports— [example: help preparing meals, help getting dressed/out of bed etc.]—like millions of other Americans, especially older Americans. Do you have a health care proposal that includes long term services and supports for people with disabilities?

I was shocked when I learned that Medicare doesn't cover really important long term services and supports for people with disabilities— will your Medicare for All plan cover these services?

As a [person with a disability/family member of a person w/ a disability], health care isn't just about hospitals and medications, but about services that help me live independently in my community—long term services and supports that private insurance doesn't have to cover. Will you expand access to long term services and supports for me and other with disabilities?

My state [has/does not have] paid family leave that helps people take time off to care for a family member, if they have a new baby, or if they get sick. [I had to take time off for caregiving/I had a baby/got sick] and I was [worried about losing my job/not being able to pay rent/etc.] and I don't think anyone should have to choose between taking time for their family and losing their job or their home. Do you support national paid family leave?

Almost 30 years since the passage of the ADA, what are you doing to protect this important law and end discrimination against people with disabilities?

Almost 30 years after the ADA passed, we're a more integrated nation with many more opportunities for people with disabilities and their families. Today, it's common to see people with disabilities at work, at school, on out and about on sidewalks and in parking lots, at shopping centers, etc. Will you commit to protect this law from efforts like additional notification periods that aren't in other civil rights laws? What will you do about places with an I-won't-do-anything-until-I'm-sued approach? What incentives or additional support will you provide to help people meet the requirements of the law?

## Template Branded Sign

Print this sign and have advocates write message for Town hall events, rallies and more.



## Release Form

I, \_\_\_\_\_, hereby give my consent (permission) to the use of my name, likeness, story, photographs, filming, or video footage (“Shared Materials”) by [*insert chapter name*] and other affiliated chapters of The Arc, including but not limited to The Arc of the United States (collectively, “The Arc and its affiliates”). I understand that my Shared Materials may be used publicly in promotional and advocacy materials, including but not limited to local, state, and national publications, websites, and the news media.

The name and location I choose to be used when my story is shared is:

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By signing this agreement, I agree to:

- Waive (not pursue) any legal claim against The Arc and its affiliates for their use of the Shared Materials, including but not limited to claims regarding invasion of privacy, payment of royalties, or damages;
- Give up my ownership of the Shared Materials to The Arc and its affiliates; and
- Give consent (permission) to The Arc and its affiliates to use the Shared Materials in any video and photography footage, including but not limited to advertisement, documentary footage, commercials), as well as in future exhibition functions, and for the release of Shared Materials to the media and other sources.

Consent requires the individual to be 18 years of age or older. If filming video footage or photography footage of persons under the age of 18 years old a parent and/or guardian must agree with the above statement and sign below.

By signing below, I agree to the use of Shared Materials as described in this document.

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Printed Name**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Signature and Date**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Legal Guardian Name (If parent, indicate it)**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Signature and Date**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Telephone Number**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Address**