

IMPORTANT, IF NOT NECESSARILY “GOOD” NEWS

Although there are many good things going on at SDMNY, our friends at ASAN (Autistic Self Advocacy Network) have alerted us to two important issues at the state and federal level that pretty much pre-empt everything else. We can't “lobby”; that is, we can't support or oppose any given piece of legislation, but we **can** provide information, so that's this week's News, “Good” or otherwise.

On the federal level, you are almost certainly aware of the drama around the looming “debt ceiling” and the negotiations going on in Washington. The bill that has passed in the House of Representatives calls for drastic cuts in “discretionary” federal spending, including Medicaid and HCBS waiver services. Here's what ASAN has to say:



“We rely on Medicaid HCBS to live independently in our communities but it is usually the first place to be hit by cuts when Medicaid funding is tight. There are already more than 650,000 people stuck on waiting lists who are not getting the services they need, and those lists will only get longer. Cuts to Medicaid will also mean more disabled people forced into institutions because they can't get the help they need to live in real homes.”

On the local level, ASAN has called our attention to bills pending in our State legislature (Senate Bill S.900: Assembly Bill A.1166) that deal with the infamous Judge Rotenberg Center (JRC) in Massachusetts. JRC is the last institution in the country that uses electric shock as a means of behavioral control over people with I/DD, a practice the United Nations has defined as “torture.” New York sends more people to JRC than any other state; the bill would prevent any further transfers of NY residents to JRC. We note also that the issues around JRC have been a significant part of the work of SDMNY's former (and beloved) Project Coordinator, Matthew (Hezzy) Smith since he left us to return to Massachusetts to work with Self-Advocates and the Disability Rights Community at the Harvard Law School Project on Disability.



If you have opinions on either of these issues, you should contact your Congressional (Senate and House) representatives and/or State (Senate and Assembly Member) representatives and make your voices heard.

THIS IS MEMORIAL DAY WEEKEND, AND WHILE WE WISH YOU A HAPPY ONE, REMEMBER THE SACRIFICES THAT WERE MADE FOR EVERYONE, INCLUDING PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES!