

Sibling Leadership Network

Policy Newsletter

March 2020

Welcome to the latest edition of the Sibling Leadership Network Policy Newsletter.

This newsletter is written by Tiffany Banks, the Policy and Advocacy chair for the Sibling Leadership Network.

COVID 19 and our families

At the time of writing this newsletter, our nation is changing rapidly. This month we will review new legislation that has been passed in response to the COVID 19 pandemic. There are currently three phases of the COVID 19 federal response legislation. Phase 2, the [Families First Act](#), made paid leave accessible for many who did not have access to this resource before. However, the Families First Act does not expand the definitions on who is covered under the Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA), meaning that siblings who were not eligible for FMLA previously are also unable to access this benefit. You can read more about the Families First Act on the Department of Labor's [website](#).

Phase 3, the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security ([CARES](#)) Act was passed through the House of Representatives and is expected to be signed into law today (3/27/2020). This \$2 trillion dollar relief fund for the COVID 19 response. While many will benefit from the passing of both bills, gaps persist for our disability community. Paid leave for caregivers of individuals over the age of 18 years is still not included in the CARES Act and concerns about the lack of PPE in residential settings for people with disabilities is a concern. For a full statement on gaps that affect our families in the disability community, review a statement from The Arc on their website [here](#).

How to get involved?

Each month the Disability Policy Newsletter will provide siblings with tips and ideas as a call to action for your involvement locally and nationally.

1. Continue to speak with your legislators and policymakers about the gaps in medical leave policies. There are several bills that have been introduced that would help family caregivers, including siblings, access paid and unpaid leave. Bills to watch include: [S.3513](#) and [S.3071](#).
2. Help bring awareness to the issues that residential and in home support staffs are facing. The Arc is asking individuals to use the hashtag #WeAreEssential to share your story on social media. Make sure that you include what our ask is directly, we need appropriate PPE for our front line staff so that our family members can continue to live independent and full lives.