

## **Governor signs Transition Age Bill Into Law**

SPED transition planning to stay at 14

Wraps up disability-related items in 2007-2008 session

### **Two positive pieces of news from Beacon Hill:**

1. Veto overrides
2. House passes S286, Transition Age Bill (Stay tuned for a follow-up message with action on this item)

#### 1. Veto Overrides:

The Legislature last night voted to override two key vetoes (worth \$1.6 million) that will bolster services for people with disabilities. The House, followed quickly by the Senate, voted overwhelmingly (unanimously in the case of the Senate) to override the following two Gubernatorial vetoes:

Residential Services (5920-2000): \$600,000 veto overridden

Autism Division (5920-3010): \$1,000,000 veto overridden

The restoration of funds for Residential Services means that six group homes will not have to close and that 20 to 25 people will be spared from being forced out of those homes. The Autism Division override will allow the autism waiver to reach more children now with the social, behavioral and communication services they need. The waiver currently serves fewer than 100 students despite the rising incidence of children with autism throughout the state.

The Legislature did not override two other requests:

Residential Rate (5920- 2006): Patrick's \$250,000 stands

State Schools (5930-1000): Patrick's \$750,000 veto stands

#### 2. Transition Age Bill:

S286 will require schools to start helping children with special education needs and their families plan for the transition to life after school when the child reaches 14. Otherwise schools would be able to delay starting this planning until the middle of high school.

### **S286 - An Act to Maintain Transition Age Requirements for Students with Disabilities**

This bill would maintain the requirement to initiate special education transition planning and transition services at age 14. A broad-based group, including educators, administrators, parents, and advocates, strongly supports maintaining initiation of transition planning and services at age 14, rather than age 16 as now allowed by federal law. Delay beyond age 14 (waiting until the middle of high school) is too late to facilitate the most effective transition planning for youth with disabilities. Filed by Sen. Ed Augustus.

Thanks to all of you who emailed and called your elected officials on these issues. Please

stay tuned for a follow-up message with more information on the budget and other Arc news and action on the Transition Age bill.

Posted by: "familyautismcenter" [familyautismcenter@yahoo.com](mailto:familyautismcenter@yahoo.com)

Governor Patrick signed into law a bill (S286) that will require schools to continue initiating special education transition planning at age 14. Federal law now allows schools to wait until 16, but a broad group of educators, administrators, parents and advocates understood that waiting until the middle of high school is too late to facilitate the most effective transition planning for youth with disabilities. Transition services are critical to facilitate a student's movement to post-school activities, including post-secondary education, vocational education, integrated employment, continuing and adult education, adult services, independent living, and community participation.

Thanks goes to Gov. Patrick for signing the bill, Sen. Ed Augustus for sponsoring it; Senators Bruce Tarr, Rep. Tom Sannicandro, and Rep. Jennifer Flanagan for their co-sponsorship .

**This brings to a close a highly successful 2007-2008 Legislative session that included:**

· Passage of two key bills:

§ Transition Age Bill (S286)

§ Human Services Rate-Setting legislation (S2764, formerly S65)

· Historic change of the name of DMR to Department of Developmental Services

· Budget victories in a tough economic climate, including increases from Governor's proposed budget in the following line-items:

§ Family Supports

§ Community Residential

§ Autism Division

§ Turning 22 services

§ DOE/DMR program