COMMONWEALTH COUNCIL ON DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES

LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES
2027 POLICY STATEMENTS

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LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

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CIVIL RIGHTS

WHY THIS MATTERS:

According to National Core Indicators only 28 % of individuals with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities take part in groups, organizations, or communities. They deserve to have quality of life similar to peers with full access to social, community, and vocational integration.

STATEMENT:

All people, regardless of ability, are entitled to equal human and civil rights.

POSITION:

CCDD supports legislation, policy, and practices that:

- Advance integrated communities that support individuals with disabilities and welcome their contributions.
- Promote the right to personal relationships and intimacy regardless of their gender identity.
- Protect and promote stronger enforcement of the Americans with Disabilities Act.
- Promote self-determination and integration in the community.
- Protect the rights of people with disabilities across the lifespan.
- Protect the rights of individuals with disabilities to vote.
- Recognize that guardianship should not be based solely on the diagnosis of intellectual or other developmental disability.
- Individuals with I/DD should be afforded the same parental rights as individuals without I/DD.

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EDUCATION

WHY THIS MATTERS:

Only 83% of Kentucky students receiving special education services graduated high school, which is 11.7 percentage points less than their nondisabled peers (Kentucky Department of Education, 2025).

In the year following high school, 19% of Kentucky students across disability categories enrolled in a college or university, compared to only 9% of students with an intellectual disability, (2024 Kentucky Post School Outcomes Center).

STATEMENT:

Inclusive education policies, starting with early childcare settings and continuing through postsecondary education, are necessary to assist Kentuckians with I/DD in reaching their full potential.

POSITION:

CCDD supports legislation, policy, and practices that advance:

- Early intervention services for children with developmental delays and disabilities.
- Equal access to the general education environment and curriculum.
- Appropriate accommodations across all educational settings.
- Safe, inclusive classrooms.
- An Individualized Education Plan (IEP) and Section 504 Plans.
- Protections for a student from improper discipline, restraint and isolation practices.
- Access to safe and affordable early education opportunities.
- Services for students who are transitioning from school to career or additional studies.
- Opportunities for post-secondary education and training.

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Independent & Accessible Living

WHY THIS MATTERS:

Less than 5% of American housing is accessible for the elderly or disabled. Institutional care costs 400% more than community supports. (Findings and Recommendations of the Exceptional Support Waiver Services Legislative Task Force)

STATEMENT:

Individuals with I/DD have a right to live independently in safe, accessible, and affordable housing in their community of choice.

POSITIONS:

CCDD supports legislation, policy, and practices that advance these beliefs:

- Individuals with I/DD are at risk of unnecessary institutionalization or homelessness due to lack of affordable, accessible housing.
- Individuals must have freedom, authority and support to exercise control over their housing, including choice of where and with whom they live, inclusive living, and privacy within their homes.
- Adults with I/DD should receive the assistance they need to transition to their community of choice, promoting independent living through principles of supported decision-making.
- Housing for individuals with I/DD must be connected to local neighborhoods and communities, transportation options, commerce, and essential services.
- Public funds must be allocated to allow people to safely live in the least restrictive environment of their choosing.
- Universal design (spaces that are usable by all people without the need for adaptation) should be adopted as a best practices for new housing.
- New and significantly renovated multi-family or affordable housing should include fully accessible units in numbers that reflect the needs of individuals with disabilities in the general population.
- Individuals with I/DD must have opportunities comparable to those of individuals without disabilities to rent or buy their own homes.

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LONG-TERM SERVICES & SUPPORTS

WHY THIS MATTERS:

More than 13,000 people are on waiting lists for the Michelle P. and Supports for Community Living Waivers. At the current rate of adding slots, it will take more than 83 years to eliminate the waiting list (Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities Technical Advisory Committee).

STATEMENT:

Home and Community Based Waiver Services (HCBS) support the ability of individuals to live life on their own terms, are more cost effective than institutions, and promote self-determination.

POSITION:

CCDD supports legislation, policy and practices that:

- Provide access to community living for all.
- Support the ability of individuals to make their own choices about how, where and with whom they choose to live.
- Allow access to a full range of accommodations necessary to ensure that living in their community is possible.
- Allow services to minor children in their home or setting of their choice.
- Include individuals with disabilities and family members as stakeholders in HCBS.
- Reduce the number of individuals waiting for services for community living.
- Promote the independence of individuals with disabilities across the lifespan.
- Allow for individuals who have medically complex needs, require the flexibility to access the needed services based on their personal needs and the ability to be supported in a community setting when appropriate.
- Create greater choices for individuals with medically complex needs including exceptional services.

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Dignity in Healthcare

WHY THIS MATTERS:

The average life expectancy for individuals with I/DD is up to 22 years less than U.S. population as a whole (National Council on Disability).

STATEMENT:

The CCDD believes that all individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD) should be treated with respect and have access to affordable healthcare in their community.

POSITION :

- Cuts to Medicaid expansion will harm access to healthcare for all Kentuckians.
- Prevent discrimination in health care programs against individuals with developmental and other disabilities.
- Enable people with disabilities to fully participate in the nation's health care system.
- Support patients and medical professionals in creating personalized treatment by incorporating a diversity of products and delivery methods.
- Support a healthcare system that provides the most appropriate and effective services with the least amount of administrative waste.
- Develop policies to ensure that health professionals receive specialized training
- Recognize the right of individuals with disabilities to make a decision about health care.
- Support medical and behavioral healthcare policies and services that meet the needs of individuals with developmental disabilities.

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EMPLOYMENT

WHY THIS MATTERS:

Only 37.9% of Kentuckians with disabilities are employed, compared to 78.2% employment for people without disabilities. That gap ranks 48th in the nation (2024 Annual Disability Statistics Compendium).

STATEMENT:

Individuals with I/DD should have opportunities to pursue and retain Competitive, Integrated Employment (CIE); creating value for themselves and their communities.

POSITION:

CCDD supports legislation, policy and practices that:

- Ensure that competitive, integrated work, including customized employment, be the first and preferred option for Kentuckians with disabilities who want to be employed.
- Educate Kentuckians that employment does not equal loss of disability benefits.
- Eliminate subminimum wage and sheltered employment, helping people with I/DD sustainably transition to CIE.
- Recognize that stable, competitive, and integrated employment is a key part of mental health and well-being for all Kentuckians, including Kentuckians with I/DD.
- Educate employers about the benefits of hiring and accommodating individuals with disabilities.
- Support public-private partnerships to incentivize hiring individuals with disabilities.
- Remove barriers to pursuing and retaining CIE by strengthening accessible transportation networks and affordable housing options in Kentucky.
- Expand fast and reliable internet service to improve access to all employment opportunities.
- Expand services for students who are transitioning from school to career.
- Shape and influence policies on employment to increase social, civic, and economic contributions of people with I/DD.

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SUPPORTED DECISION-MAKING

WHY THIS MATTERS:

73% of people with I/DD in Kentucky are under some form of guardianship, removing the freedom of choice in many aspects of their lives (National Core Indicators In-Person Survey 2023/2024).

STATEMENT:

SDM principles allow individuals to stay in control of their lives while receiving the help and assistance they need to do so, thus reducing the need for full guardianship.

POSITION:

CCDD supports legislation, policy and practices that:

- Individuals with disabilities should make choices about their own lives with support from a team of people
- Supported decision-making should be considered for the person as an alternative to guardianship. If guardianship is necessary, supported decision-making principles should be part of the guardianship.
- Recognize that SDM is based on the idea of self-determination. This means that an individual directs the plan for their own life.
- Promote guardianship as a last resort.
- All people can be self-determined even those perceived to have the most severe disabilities, who may or may not communicate with traditional speech.
- Relationships and interdependence in our communities are essential

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TRANSPORTATION

WHY THIS MATTERS:

People with disabilities are forced to reduce their daily travel due to lack of transportation, often preventing them from receiving necessary medical care, participating in the workforce and having community access.

STATEMENT:

Reliable, accessible, and affordable access to transportation is critical to ensure people with I/DD are fully included in all aspects of their communities.

POSITION:

CCDD supports legislation, policy, and practices that advance:

- Increases in the flexibility and growth in available transportation options throughout Kentucky for all constituents, including those in rural areas.
- Public transportation that is adequately funded and available.
- Existing public transportation that is accessible, available in a timely manner and equipped to meet the physical, sensory and or cognitive needs of all individuals.
- The availability of paratransit systems for those who need them at comparable cost and funded as an alternative to mass transportation.
- The options of owning and operating a vehicle.
- Transportation as a vital component of successful employment.

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