

# ***Disability Task Force Meeting: Legislative Update on Supported Decision Making (SDM)***

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# The Arc's Mission

Our mission is to enhance the lives of individuals with autism and intellectual and developmental disabilities and their families.

We do this through advocating for community services and supports that foster social inclusion, self determination and equity across all aspects of society.



# What does The Arc do?

Budget

Legislation

Policy

Medicaid

Programs

Empowerment

# History of the SDM Legislation

- 191<sup>st</sup> Session
  - An Act Relative To Supported Decision-making Agreements for Certain Adults With Disabilities
  - Rep Tucker, Vega and Senator Lovely
- Passed favorably from Joint Committee on Children, Families and Persons with Disabilities
- Bi-partisan support – so close to the finish line
- **Covid-19 shut down – needed SDM in hospitals**

# COALITION STRENGTH



Massachusetts

# 192<sup>nd</sup> Legislative Session S.124 H. 272



# A challenging session for Advocates!

- New Chairs of Children and Families – due diligence
- State House shut down - access to staff/hybrid/work from home
- Covid-19 requiring virtual testimony and email as main follow up
- Close to 7,000 bills filed Covid legislation/ARPA and backed up bills still taking priority

# End of Session Push



- Great letter to editor
- Blanketing the legislature, 100's of individuals respond **to action alerts**
- 30 plus co-sponsors and Chairs weigh in with leadership
- Sponsors make it high priority



# Legislature Under Pressure

- Advocates pushing until the final hours - Sunday evening end of session
- Sponsors and Ways and Means – positive communication
- Chapter 62F – Eco Dev falls apart
- 6 Conference Committees in play



# Informal Strategy Emerges

- Getting in the cue
- Must have **unanimous** support
- Coalition working hard – Sponsors strong, no one is giving up
- **Speaker of the House**
- Prioritization within the legislature still an issue
- Plan for re-file – hopefully not needed

# Challenges and Key Points

## Barriers

- Prioritization
  - Implicit bias, we are a marginalized community (example - workforce)
- Must see the need
- Clear cost and cost effectiveness
- Families struggling with covid, programming, burn out – advocacy energy dipping

## Opportunities

- **The personal stories!**
- Saves time and money in probate courts by reducing the number of guardianship petitions for people who do not need them.
- SDM does not replace guardianship. It is an additional and less restrictive option.
- Brittany Spears story!
- 11 other jurisdictions
- National agencies endorse

# What can you do now?

- Contact your legislators
- Educate: use fact sheet on MDDC website
- Prepare your story
- Will your Rep/Senator champion the bill in this informal session?
- They should contact Rep Tucker, Rep Garballey, Senator Lovely
- They should write to/speak with leadership
- Make it their priority for the informal session

# Make Connections and Stay Connected

- Use **social media** – tag your legislator
- Get more district families involved
- If refile in January, encourage your Rep/Senator to co-sponsor
- You should stay connected to the advocacy groups for hearing info and action alerts
- Contact The Arc or MDDC with any questions  
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