

Dear Board, Members, Friends and Allies

I am excited to bring everyone up to date on advocacy work that has been occurring in the last few months at The Arc of Iowa.

In the last year, the Arc has organized a diverse, passionate team of people to work with elected officials, other advocacy groups and the provider network to improve life in the community for our family members and neighbors. In fact Arc of Iowa holds a weekly strategy meeting comprised of Arc, self-advocates and representatives of a young family network.

During the recently completed legislative session we focused on needs and policy issues like; 1) the direct care worker crisis, 2) reimbursement rates for long term care services and support and 3) making restrooms across the state more accessible for individuals who need MORE than a large toilet stall.

In this message I want to share our **exciting work with #3 which is called Changing Spaces**; and how **you** can help turn this critical need a reality.

**Background** – In the last 2 years some families of elementary age children were finding no place to toilet them because a) their child was not ambulatory/capable of using a toilet and b) baby changing tables would not hold their child. Finding floors, back of cars or outside on the ground became the place toileting occurred. These families felt their situation was exactly like so many others – adults who had strokes, neuromuscular disease, and as well as many other citizens needing a safe clean place that they and their caregiver(s) could safely toilet in a dignified way. These families decided to encourage Iowa to do what several other states were doing – placing adjustable height adult sized changing tables in public spaces. Those families joined with The Arc’s policy/advocacy committee and the work began.

**Activity** - In the early days of the state legislative session a bill was introduced to create language to create accessible bathroom space with adjustable height, adult size changing tables. The bill did not move and the group was concerned. In March, the Iowa Department of Transportation (IDOT) became aware of the bill and the movement for Changing Spaces. The IDOT was just launching a remodeling/updating of state rest stops. The IDOT and The Arc committee began conversations and shared information. At that time IDOT committed to Changing Spaces at rest stops being remodeled in the next 4 years (about 25). Working together, a template for those “new” facilities was created. The template is attached.

Energized and enthused about the relationship many efforts to reach out to hospitals, City recreation facilities, airports were carried out. Then in March the new infrastructure bill was introduced federally. One of the committee members (Nancy Baker Curtis) began a letter writing campaign with one letter directed to the Department of Transportation federally. In 14 days she had a response! That is included with this message.

The partnership of IDOT and the Arc/network has caught the eye of the federal government. On June 25 from 2 -3 Eastern Time, there will be a public hearing and ANYONE can register for it. More importantly, there is a need for **public comments** about creating equity in transportation.

We need YOU!

Do you or do you know someone who is limited to travel because there is no way to be toileted (except maybe on a floor)?

Do you or do you know someone who must be lifted from a wheelchair to the floor? Have you been concerned about filth and dirt that someone lays in during toileting?

Do you believe that lowans with disabilities should be able to travel to see a doctor, visit friends/relatives, enjoy a day away and be assured there is a place to stop for dignified, sanitary spot to carry out bathroom requirements?

We would appreciate if you would take a few minutes to submit a public comment.

Headway has been started in Iowa but wouldn't it be wonderful if our loved ones could anticipate a trip to the next state of even further and not have to be changed in the back seat of a car, on a floor or a blanket off the road?

Would you review the attached materials? Then please consider submitting a comment. Feel free to join us on the virtual discussion as well.

Change can happen, when we advocate and work together.

Delaine Petersen  
Board President, The Arc of Iowa

### Upcoming Public Hearing

**CHANGE OF DATE** – *This event has been moved to Friday, June 25 in recognition of Juneteenth as an official Federal holiday. Federal offices will be closed on Friday, June 18 in observation of the Juneteenth holiday.*

On June 25, from 2pm ET–3pm ET, USDOT is hosting a virtual public information session on Equity at DOT. During this information session, you will hear from senior DOT leaders about our equity agenda and Request for Information on Transportation Equity Data.

[Register](#) today!

### Resources

- [U.S. Department of Transportation Announces Request for Information on Transportation Data and Assessment Methods Press Release](#)
- [Federal Register - Request for Information on Transportation Equity Data](#)
- [How to comment on the docket instructions](#)

