

## VOR Annual Meeting, June 12, 2022

### Report from Michigan

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The ARC Michigan is holding a Disability Public Policy Webinar by Zoom every Friday in June 2022. It is a chance to hear from state officials with knowledge about current policies and future plans that will affect people with I/DD. The first Friday, June 3, 2022, included an overview of the workforce shortage. A state workgroup is coming up with proposals to bolster the competence, wages, and working conditions of direct care workers (DCW). The Governor's proposed budget proposes "expansion of residential models built on enhanced wages" for DCWs. A supplemental budget to maintain and increase wages is stalled. So far, the workgroup is proposing starting wages of \$17 to \$18 per hour. Stay tuned...

People living in group homes were vaccinated and boosted as soon as vaccines became available. This part of the pandemic was handled well and with the urgency it deserved considering the risks to this population. The last 2 ½ years of COVID, however, have been especially hard on people with I/DD and their families. For families taking care of an adult family member with I/DD in their home, it was next to impossible to find caregivers. Programs that had been closed started to open up in the summer of 2021, but for people with the most severe disabilities, programs were still relying on the ability of people to wear masks and social distance to maintain a safe environment. This was not always possible for people with the most severe disabilities. There were additional closures with surges in COVID cases.

My sons' group home was free of COVID until April of this year, when everyone contracted it at once – they all had mild symptoms and are fine now.

***The following are links to posts with short excerpts from my [blog](#) that may be of interest to other VOR members:***

**Thursday, June 17, 2021**

**[Michigan businesses and organizations that hold special subminimum wage certificates for people with disabilities](#)**

**...There are 1,704 subminimum wage certificates in Michigan issued by the US Department of Labor.** 13 businesses have wage certificates "pending". If Congress eliminates these subminimum wage certificates, many of these employees will either lose employment opportunities currently offered or they will be shifted to other programs, such as day programs, if they are unable to unwilling to participate in competitive employment. ...

**Friday, August 13, 2021**

**[COVID-19 - It's not a hoax and vaccination is not a plot to depopulate the world.](#)**

...I am against tyranny as much as the next person, but I consider mask mandates in about the same category as the requirement to stop for red lights when I am out driving. Both are annoying at times, but do not restrict my freedom in any important way.

Civil disobedience can be an effective means to resist unjust laws and push for change, but this kind of resistance was never meant to come without consequences and individual sacrifice. [Threatening and harrasing public health officials and school boards](#) considering mask mandates is neither free speech nor within the scope of civil disobedience. Civil disobedience or other resistance to following public health mandates may mean that other people may not like you very much, but this is not an infringement of your right to free speech...

**Wednesday, October 27, 2021**

**[Another attempt to further privatize the Michigan Community Mental Health system](#)**

*This is from the Community Mental Health Association of Michigan ([CMHAM](#)). From the Website - "The Community Mental Health Association of Michigan (CMHA) is the state association representing the state's public Community Mental Health (CMH) centers, the public Prepaid Inpatient Health Plans (PIHP) public health plans formed and governed by the CMH centers and the providers within the CMH and PIHP provider networks." Michigan CMH agencies serve people with developmental disabilities, as well as individuals with mental illness and other disabilities.*

*Despite the flaws in the Michigan CMH system, and there are many, I agree with this statement - "This approach is nothing more than a [Medicaid] health plan money grab, these bills will not improve care for Michigan's most vulnerable citizens, it will eliminate local decision making and only put more money into the pockets of insurance companies – this is BAD public policy." These are the same policies that the legislature, with the help of private Medicaid Health Plans, has been trying to impose on Michigan for at least the last 10 years....*

**Monday, November 15, 2021**

**[Thinking differently about COVID outbreaks with widespread vaccination and a better understanding of the virus](#)**

*In an [article](#) in the San Francisco Chronicle, "We need to start thinking differently about COVID outbreaks, says UCSF's Monica Gandhi", 11/11/21, Gandhi is critical of recent decisions that she*

*believes are too restrictive, now that there are areas of the country with high rates of vaccination and evidence that some venues are not conducive to spread of the COVID virus.*

...

*My own interest in this is in keeping my sons, who have multiple disabilities, and other residents of their group home from contracting COVID. None of them need or deserve the consequences of sloppy thinking and excessive risk-taking that could lead to the preventable transmission of the virus. The so-called "Dignity of Risk" where many disability advocates see risk as a virtue, does not apply in this situation...*

**Tuesday, March 1, 2022**

### **[Emergency department care and hospitalization: It's not just COVID that is the problem...](#)**

*These are personal experiences I have had involving my sons' care at the University of Michigan hospital in Ann Arbor. To be sure, my sons have received outstanding and sometimes life-saving care through Michigan Medicine, but in a large institutional setting like the University of Michigan Hospital, there are pitfalls and gaps in care that can make a visit to the ER or hospitalization excruciating for patients and their families. Improvements in care rely on acknowledging the flaws as well as successes in treating patients, especially those with extraordinary medical needs...*

**Friday, May 6, 2022**

### **[Budget Alert from the Michigan Assisted Living Association \(MALA\)](#)**

*This is from the Michigan Assisted Living Association ([MALA](#)) on increasing wages for direct care workers who provide services to people with developmental disabilities as well as those who are aging or have mental illness or physical disabilities.*

*The only thing I would change about this appeal is to make sure it applies to direct care workers regardless of where the individual served lives. Workers in group homes, nursing homes, and other settings are as vital to the care of people with disabilities as those who are hired to work in the individual's own home...*