



FOR RELEASE: AFTER NOON ON FEBRUARY 11, 2020

CONTACT: Jessie Johnson | 850-386-9100 | jjohnson@rboa.com

Advocates Gather at State Capitol for Developmental Disabilities and Transportation Awareness Day

Tallahassee, Fla. (Feb. 11) – Hundreds of Floridians concerned about the quality of care and services for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities as well as those who are transportation disadvantaged gathered at the state Capitol today for the 2020 Developmental Disabilities and Transportation Awareness Day.

Hosted by the Florida Developmental Disabilities Council (FDDC), The Arc of Florida, the Florida Public Transportation Association and the Florida Commission for the Transportation Disadvantaged, self-advocates, families and caregivers from around the state showed the importance of direct care services, alternative approaches to transportation and the need for increased state funding and support for Florida’s most vulnerable citizens.

“We are beyond grateful for the thousands of individuals and family members who have voiced their concerns over the need for adequate services,” said Valerie Breen, executive director of FDDC. “We are now in a place where Legislators are not only listening to these concerns, but making positive changes to promote meaningful lives for all Floridians.”

The event’s awareness rally - kicked-off by Rep. Ray Rodrigues (R-Estero-Lee D-76) - focused on saving the iBudget Waiver, the state’s health insurance program that serves nearly 35,000 individuals living with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Speakers encouraged constituents to make their voices heard and urged Florida lawmakers to continue considering these individuals throughout the legislative session.

Lisa Bacot, executive director of the Florida Public Transportation Association, added, “The lack of reliable transportation services is one of the top barriers to any individual leading a productive, healthy and active lifestyle. By partnering together to hold this event, we can bring more awareness to this issue and help build better solutions.”

In addition to the awareness rally, attendees had the opportunity to speak with legislators, visit support organizations’ exhibits and connect with others for a unified voice of advocacy and change.

“The developmental disability community and networks have come together in a way that hasn’t been seen in many years and it is making a real difference,” said Kirk Hall, CEO of The Arc of Florida. “Legislators are making a concerted effort to address the staffing crisis and have been responsive to concerns raised by advocates regarding possible changes in services. We will need everyone to stay solution focused, as there is still much work that needs to be done.”

For more information about Developmental Disabilities and Transportation Awareness Day go to www.legislateday.com. For more information on the iBudget Waiver, visit www.ibudgetwaiver.com.

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The Arc of Florida, Inc. is a non-profit organization whose mission is to improve the quality of life for persons with developmental disabilities. Working with local, state and national partners, The Arc of Florida advocates for local chapters, public policies and high quality supports for people with developmental and other disabilities to be fully included in all aspects of their community. www.arcflorida.org.

The Florida Public Transportation Association (FPTA) is a non-profit association whose members include rural and urban public transit agencies in Florida as well as interested citizens and businesses. FPTA's mission is to continuously support public transportation in Florida through advocacy, innovation, education, and partnerships. <https://floridatransit.org>.

The mission of the Florida Developmental Disabilities Council (FDDC) is to advocate and promote meaningful participation in all aspects of life for Floridians with developmental disabilities. www.fddc.org