

Testimony of Maureen Westcott, The Arc of Pennsylvania
PA House Veteran's Affairs and Emergency Preparedness Committee
Public Hearing on HB 2562 (Barrar)
Proposed rewrite of Title 35 (Health and Safety)
Harrisburg, Pennsylvania
August 17, 2012

Thank you, Representative Barrar for extending an invitation to testify before the Committee on this important public safety proposal. My name is Maureen Westcott and I am the Public Policy Advocate with The Arc of Pennsylvania, a statewide non-profit organization that provides advocacy and resources for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities and their families. The Arc of PA was established in 1949 and is affiliated with 34 local chapters representing 51 counties across Pennsylvania, as well as The Arc of the United States based in Washington, D.C. The Arc is a grassroots, membership-driven organization with over 9,000 members in Pennsylvania.

The purpose of my testimony is to offer a suggestion on HB 2562, Section 5. 7312 Pennsylvania Emergency Management Council, specifically Section 5.7312 (2) (ii) which authorizes the Governor to appoint nonvoting representation from:

- up to two representatives of business and industry,
- up to two representatives of labor,
- up to two public members at large and
- one representative respectively of:
 - County Commissioners Association of Pennsylvania,
 - Pennsylvania State Association of Township Commissioners,
 - Pennsylvania State Association of Township Supervisors,
 - Pennsylvania League of Cities and Municipalities,
 - Pennsylvania State Association of Boroughs and
 - Keystone Emergency Management Association

Section 5.7312 (2) (iv) states that the Governor may appoint nonvoting representatives of key private sectors, including

- the energy utility,
- medical,
- police,
- fire,
- emergency medical services,
- communications,
- transportation,
- education,
- agriculture and
- labor sectors, and
- two members-at-large.

No one on either list would have specific understanding of the needs of individuals with disabilities or special needs such as seniors. It is critical to have a participant on the council that understands and represents this population. An example of this knowledge and experience is the November 2010 FEMA (Federal Emergency Management Agency) guidelines on emergency sheltering to help state planners and non-profit organizations ensure that people with access and functional needs receive lawful and equitable assistance in the aftermath of a disaster.

I appreciate being able to provide the perspective of individuals with disabilities and special needs, who are full members of our community; but whose needs may be challenging during the franticness of an emergency situation. Many good resources are available in the community to help during these times, and it is important that anything done at a state level takes into account their needs.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this important issue.