

Board Resolution on Access to Life-Preserving Medical Care

WHEREAS persons with disabilities are full citizens and are entitled to all the rights, benefits and privileges of life in the United States; and

WHEREAS persons with disabilities are sometimes denied timely access to life-preserving medical care that similarly situated persons without disabilities would receive; and

WHEREAS the House of Representatives and the Senate of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania passed Senate Bill 492 during the 2003-2004 Session that would have in part protected the rights of persons with disabilities to access life-preserving medical services and the Governor of Pennsylvania subsequently vetoes Senate Bill 492;

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that The Arc of Pennsylvania will work during the 2005-2006 and future Pennsylvania legislative sessions with local chapters of The Arc, other disability advocates including self-advocates and other similarly interested organizations and individuals to enact legislation and/or promulgate regulations that ensure the rights of persons with disabilities in Pennsylvania to have access to life-preserving medical services and to the fair exercise of personal choice and autonomy regardless of disability.

AND FURTHER RESOLVED that The Arc of Pennsylvania will work to the fullest extent possible to include in any legislation and/or regulations recognition of the following principles:

1. That all persons regardless of disability who are not terminally ill have compelling personal interest to preserve their own lives;
2. That mental retardation regardless of severity is not a terminal illness;
3. That health care professionals must support and facilitate people with disabilities having the full range of choices regarding life-preserving medical services;
4. That substitute decision makers will make decisions solely in the best interests of incompetent persons and that where possible a person's preferences with regard to substitute decision makers will be honored; and
5. That all persons regardless of disability who are terminally ill have a right to die with dignity and to palliative care that will reduce pain and suffering during the dying process.