



This Week @ Iowa Capitol | Week 4 | February 2, 2026

Another Busy Week at the State Capitol

The Iowa Capitol was buzzing with activity last week. Legislators took Monday off to attend their local caucuses, so the action was packed into a shorter three-day week. That did not stop lawmakers from having 141 subcommittee meetings and 31 committee meetings in that short timeframe.

What really kept the place hopping were the hundreds of activists and everyday Iowans who packed the halls, jumping from their Capitol Day displays to the crowded rotunda where people send in notes to their state legislators. Some of those advocates were part of the **Iowa DD Council's Capitol Advocacy Days** and **Let Us Work** campaign.

On Tuesday, students in the **University of Iowa UIREACH Program** met with many legislators and discussed the need for grants so more Iowans with disabilities have access to comprehensive transition post-secondary (CTP) programs like UIREACH. They also educated lawmakers about ways to reduce barriers to employment.



UIREACH students talk about barriers to employment with Rep. Eddie Andrews of Johnston (above) and Rep. Ross Wilburn of Ames (below).



Members of the **Iowa Council of the United Blind** were fortunate to talk to many legislators on Wednesday about the accessible prescription labeling bill and accessible absentee voting. They also talked about the benefits of the “Work Without Worry” bill and support for the Iowa Department for the Blind.



Iowa Council of the United Blind members get ready to advocate in the Iowa Capitol.



Iowa Council of the United Blind ask Sen. Sarah Trone Garriott of West Des Moines to "Let Us Work."

If you are part of a group of advocates who want to visit your legislators at the Capitol, the Iowa DD Council can help. Every Friday from 12:30-1 pm, Carlyn Crowe, the Council's Public Policy Manager, is hosting a free drop-in mini-training over Zoom to help get people ready to pack the halls of our State Capitol. She can also help you navigate the Capitol and find your legislators during your visit (when available). To find out more, contact Carlyn at carlyn.crowe@hhs.iowa.gov or 515-201-8151.

New & Noteworthy Bills

A lot of new bills were introduced this week (217 to be exact). There were a few that we wanted to make sure you knew about:

- [Senate File 2181](#) is the same as [House File 2003](#), which we reported in our first weekly report. These bills allow a school district to set up a **separate school for students receiving special education services and students with serious behavioral conditions**. Disability Rights Iowa is opposed to these bills and many advocates say this is a violation of the "[Least Restrictive Environment](#)" rule in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). This federal law requires students with disabilities to be educated with their non-disabled peers to the maximum extent appropriate. The bills are in the [House Education Committee](#) & [Senate Education Committee](#).
- [House File 2306](#) outlines **new responsibilities for teachers and staff who work with Section 504 plans and Individualized Education Plans (IEPs)**. Teachers must read the plans and provide written notice to the student's special education teacher stating they've read the plan. School employees who help with classroom instruction for students with IEPs or 504 plans must attend all related meetings unless a parent objects. This bill is in the [House Education Committee](#).
- [House File 2312](#) creates a task force to look for **solutions to make housing more affordable**, with a report due at the end of the year. This is important because Iowans with disabilities want to live in the least restrictive environment possible. Because many Iowans with disabilities are limited in what they can earn or save, it can be difficult to find safe, affordable homes or apartments in the community. This bill is in the [House Economic Growth & Technology Committee](#).
- [House File 2333](#) makes it clear that persons with disabilities, their assistants, and service animal trainers have the **right to be**

accompanied by service animals and service animals in training in any public or otherwise allowed place without interference or being charged a fee. Iowa's list was not as long as the federal list of allowed places, so this better aligns Iowa law with federal law. This bill is in the [House Judiciary Committee](#).

- [House Study Bill 664](#) does not allow a city or county to pass a law or policy to protect the civil rights of its citizens that is broader than what is included in the **Iowa Civil Rights Act of 1965**. Some communities have decided to protect the rights of transgender Iowans; this would no longer be allowed. Some communities go further than the protections in that law to create “livable communities.” That might also not be allowed. This bill is in the [House Judiciary Committee](#) and a subcommittee is scheduled for Monday (2/9) at Noon. You can watch this subcommittee live [here](#) or listen by calling 1.408.418.9388 (access code: 24826021638).

Bills on the Move

The Iowa DD Council has its eyes on several bills that are moving through the legislative process. The Legislature took action on a few of these bills last week:

- [House File 2171](#) **no longer requires students to get vaccines** in order to [attend school](#). Many students with disabilities have health conditions that may not allow them to be vaccinated. They may also have a higher risk of complications if they get the flu or a virus. By not having others at school vaccinated, this law puts kids with disabilities at risk. This bill passed out of the [House Education Committee](#) last week and is therefore safe from the first legislative “funnel” deadline. Contact your [State Representative](#) if this is something you are concerned about. _____
- [Senate Study Bill 3052](#) allows **driverless cars** to operate in Iowa. The [Iowa DD Council](#) is watching this bill because many Iowans with disabilities face transportation barriers. This bill passed subcommittee this

this week and is ready for a full vote in the [Senate Transportation Con](#)

■ Behavioral Health Service System Fund ■ Disability Services System

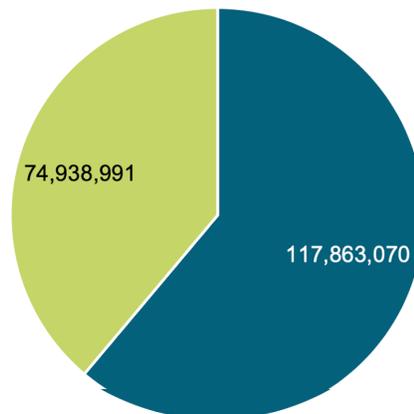
- [House Study Bill 621](#) requires a **regular review of Medicaid rates for home and community-based services (HCBS)**. Iowa Medicaid does this for other provider types, but there is currently no review of HCBS rates. This makes it hard for legislators to decide how much rates need to be increased in order to keep up with the cost of providing care. In addition, all rates will be compared to Medicare rates, Medicaid rates in neighboring states, and Medicaid rates in states with a similar population. Right now Iowa Medicaid only looks at Medicare rates for the rates they currently review. This bill passed out of subcommittee this week and is ready for a full [House HHS Committee](#) vote. This is our Bill of the Week for this week — [you can find it here](#).

Presentations & Resources

The House Health & Human Services Budget Subcommittee got an update on Iowa's **behavioral health services system**. You can find the slides for this presentation [here](#).

- 60% of the funds in the system go toward behavioral health and **40% are directed toward disability services**. You can see the amounts in the chart below.

Behavioral Health Service System Fund



■ Behavioral Health Service System Fund ■ Disability Services System

- Of the funds spent on services by the behavioral health administrative services organization (ASO):
 - 32% went to crisis services
 - 20% went to early intervention
 - 12% for treatment
 - 11% for recovery
 - 7% for prevention
 - 6% each went for commitments, jail-based service, and direct provider support.
- Most of the calls that came in for system navigation were for mental health referrals (38%), help with housing (20%), and substance use referrals (12%).

Iowa Workforce Development also presented to a budget subcommittee this week. You can find the slides for that presentation [here](#).

- They reported **eliminating waiting lists for vocational rehabilitation** so that more lowans with disabilities are receiving employment support.
- **Iowa Disability Determination Services** has continued to receive federal recognition for low processing times ([81 days](#) compared to the national average of 190 days). That means Iowa cleared 19,647 cases last year.
- They earmarked \$3.4 million to create an **apprenticeship program for teachers and paraeducators**. Paraeducators are an essential part of the education system for students with disabilities.

Last Chance to Comment on HOME Waivers

Iowa HHS is working on a project to change Iowa's home and community-based services (HCBS) waivers. The new waiver program is called the Hope and Opportunity in Many Environments (HOME) project.

This is the last week to send in your comments on Iowa's HOME waiver application. Iowa HHS wants to combine its waivers into three: adults with

disabilities, children and youth, and elderly. This allows the state to focus on the support and services a person needs, rather than the person's diagnosis.

Last Friday's Capitol Chat focused on how to submit comments, listed the services that will be eliminated or moved under a different Medicaid plan, and listed the services that will be added. You can watch it or review the slides [here](#).

You can find out more about the plan at the links below:

General Information

Slides from public meetings

You have until **Friday, February 13 at 11:59 p.m.** to submit your comments. You can find out how to do this [here](#).

Find all the bills we are tracking at:

iowaddcouncil.org/bill-tracker

Take action on bills by emailing your legislators at:

iowaddcouncil.org/take-action-center

Find local legislative town hall meetings in our calendar at:

iowaddcouncil.org/calendar

Find our bills of the week at:

iowaddcouncil.org/bill-of-the-week
