

2024 Legislative Priorities

Our Mission

Paraquad champions equity and independence for people with disabilities through services, partnerships, education, and advocacy.

Our Vision

We envision an integrated society free of barriers and discrimination where disability is viewed as a natural part of human diversity.

People with disabilities should have access to home- and community-based services that allow them to live independent lives in their homes and communities.

- We support increasing funding for the Consumer Directed Services (CDS) program to 100 percent of the funding for nursing home care, thereby allowing people with disabilities who meet a nursing home level of care to choose in-home support to remain independent.
- We support responsible reform of the CDS program to ensure the integrity of this essential service.
- We support increasing provider rates for Consumer Directed Services. (An updated and accurate Mercer Study is one part of this process.)

People with disabilities should have opportunities to pursue economic independence.

- We will monitor implementation and appropriations for Missouri's improved MO HealthNet Buy-in (MBI) Program—the Ticket to Work Health Assurance Program as amended in 2023 - and evaluate if it is meeting the needs of workers with disabilities.
- Advocate for periodic cost of living adjustments to asset and income limits in federal and state programs.
- People with disabilities should be protected by labor laws that safeguard safety and access to basic human needs (food, shelter, etc.).
- We will monitor implementation of the “Employment First” policy as passed in 2023 to see that it truly prioritizes competitive, integrated employment settings where disabled workers interact with nondisabled coworkers.
- We advocate for partnerships between state agencies, supported employment providers, and employers to overcome barriers in meeting workforce needs.

People with disabilities should have access to quality, affordable health care that meets their needs.

- We oppose any efforts to weaken the vital “safety net” (e.g., implementation of block grants or per capita cap models of Medicaid).

- We oppose implementing work-hour documentation requirements for Medicaid recipients.
- We oppose efforts to include people with disabilities in managed care delivery systems that do not ensure access to quality, affordable health care for people with disabilities.
- We will continue to monitor implementation of the expanded Medicaid program, passed by citizen initiative in 2020, to ensure that it provides equal coverage for the expansion group and covers home and community-based services.

Paraquad supports increasing Independent Living funding to the level recommended by the federal government.

- Centers for Independent Living (CILS) are nonprofit organizations in place to provide broad services, supports, and resources to help Missourians live and remain independent at home. Every county in Missouri is served by a CIL.
- CILs serve people with ALL disabilities and those of ANY AGE; they have disability resource expertise and are well connected to assist those who are born with a disability, acquire a disability in life, or develop an age-related disability.
- According to a 2014 National Base Level Funding Study, centers should be funded at \$570,000 per center. Most Missouri centers are currently funded at \$255,862. This is a \$314,138 SHORTFALL per center.

People with disabilities should have access to safe, affordable, accessible housing.

- Understanding that inability to secure accessible housing is a significant barrier to independent living and de-institutionalization, we support policies to address the shortage of more than 120,000 rental units across Missouri for people with low incomes.
- We support continued reform to the Low-Income Housing Tax Credit including universal design and extending the affordability period.
- Missouri should prioritize stable communities and protect vulnerable people by addressing housing needs before, during, and after the eviction process.

Robust public transportation is essential to ensuring people with disabilities have access to education and employment opportunities, safe housing, and can fully participate in their communities.

- We support a statewide funding plan for transit access that includes subsidies for paratransit services ensuring healthcare, employment, and education access for Missourians with disabilities.
- We advocate for partnerships between transportation networks (the Disability Transportation Resources Network, for example), transportation companies, and local public transit authorities to address disability service gaps.

- We support policies that promote development (housing, shopping, services, etc.) near public transit.
- We resource public transportation users in St. Louis City and County to be an effective voice in receiving the excellent, safe, and efficient paratransit that they need and deserve.

Youth with disabilities must have access to a free and appropriate public education adapted to their individual needs in the most integrated setting possible.

- We support legislation that would require a parent or guardian to consent to any changes to their child(ren)'s Individualized Education Program (IEP).
- We support legislation to shift the burden of proof from the parent(s) to the district in the event of a due process complaint.
- We oppose revenue reductions that impact the state's ability to fund public education, including property tax cuts, freezes, or limits.
- We support the replication and expansion of programs that successfully meet the needs of students with disabilities, who live in poverty, or who are otherwise considered "at-risk".

People with disabilities must be able to participate fully and equally in the democratic process.

- We oppose any legislation that discriminates against people with disabilities or makes accessing election information, registering to vote, or casting a ballot more difficult for voters living with disabilities. The St. Louis City and County boards of election should make a robust "permanently disabled voter" process available and send applications for each election to voters with disabilities who are on their permanently disabled list.
- We support the right of voters with disabilities to accessible, reliable, and private voting technology, processes, and formats.
- We support the removal of all physical accessibility barriers to polling centers.