

OASIS · AT A GLANCE

The two bills that could actually save your services

One puts emergency money into a collapsing workforce for two years. The other removes the structural rule that makes an institution bed an entitlement and a support worker in your home a favor. Both need cosponsors.

BY JIM PALASTY · 11 MIN READ · FEDERAL LEGISLATION

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FMAP POINTS

The HCBS Relief Act's federal match boost, for two years.

How it works

THREE STEPS

STEP 1

A bill is introduced

S.2076 and H.R.4029 in June 2025. The Access Act in April 2026.



STEP 2

Cosponsors accumulate

This is the only stage where a constituent phone call moves anything.



STEP 3

Committee or oblivion

Most bills die here quietly. Cosponsor counts decide which ones do not.

What each bill would do

Relief Act: FMAP	10 point increase, 95 percent cap
Relief Act: years	Fiscal 2026 and 2027, spend by Sept 2029
Relief Act: DSP wages	Rate increases, paid leave, hazard pay
Relief Act: waiting lists	Funds may serve people currently waiting
Relief Act: caregivers	Respite and caregiver compensation
Relief Act: sponsor	Sen. Lujan, Rep. Dingell, June 12, 2025
Access Act: structure	Home care on par with institutional care
Access Act: waivers	Removes the waiver bottleneck
Access Act: workforce	Federal match to build capacity and wages
Access Act: sponsors	Rep. Dingell and Rep. Schakowsky, April 2026

WHY A COSPONSOR NUMBER MATTERS

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Ellen called her House office about the HCBS Relief Act and got a staffer who had never heard of it. Six weeks and four calls later, that staffer sent her the cosponsor request form her office had submitted. Nothing about Ellen's argument was novel. What changed was that a bill nobody in that office had heard of became a bill four constituents had called about.

BILLS DO NOT DIE FROM OPPOSITION. THEY DIE FROM SILENCE.

What matters, at a glance

HCBS Relief Act

S.2076 and H.R.4029. A 10 point FMAP increase for HCBS during fiscal 2026 and 2027, capped at 95 percent.

What the money can do

Raise DSP reimbursement, fund paid leave and hazard pay, serve people on waiting lists, support family caregivers.

HCBS Access Act

The structural one. It puts home based care on equal footing with institutional care instead of leaving it behind a waiver, which is the mechanism that produced waiting lists in the first place. Reintroduced by Rep. Dingell and Rep. Schakowsky in April 2026.

Why the waiver design matters

A 1915(c) waiver lets a state cap enrollment. That single permission is the reason a person can be eligible for a service, need the service, and wait 37 months anyway. Nursing facilities have no such cap. Remove the cap and the waiting list has no legal basis to exist.

People waiting

More than 600,000 on Medicaid HCBS waiting or interest lists in 2025 across 41 states, up 14 percent in a year.

Michigan connection

Rep. Debbie Dingell of Michigan's 6th District leads both bills in the House. That is leverage a Michigan family can actually use.

BRING THESE · CHECK AS YOU GO

- | | |
|---|---|
| ☐ Your full address, so they can verify the district | ☐ The bill number, said out loud, twice |
| ☐ One sentence naming your family member | ☐ One sentence on what happens without the service |
| ☐ A specific ask: cosponsor this bill | ☐ The staffer's name and email |
| ☐ A written follow up within 24 hours | ☐ A calendar reminder to call again in three weeks |

YOUR MOVE

How to actually move a federal bill from your kitchen

- 1 Look up your members and the bill status on congress.gov.
- 2 Call the district office. Ask the cosponsor question.
- 3 Follow up in writing with your one paragraph story.
- 4 Ask for a fifteen minute meeting with the health staffer.
- 5 Bring your provider or CMH with you to that meeting.
- 6 Report the answer publicly. Silence is also information.

A congressional office logs constituent contacts by bill number. Your story is what makes the call memorable. The bill number is what makes it countable.

RESOURCES NAMED IN THIS POST

congress.gov · <https://www.congress.gov/>

ancor.org · <https://www.ancor.org/>

thearc.org/policy-advocacy · <https://thearc.org/policy-advocacy/>

debbiedingell.house.gov · <https://debbiedingell.house.gov/>

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR



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