



Maryland Developmental Disabilities Council

EMPOWERMENT • OPPORTUNITY • INCLUSION

House Appropriations Committee
February 27, 2020

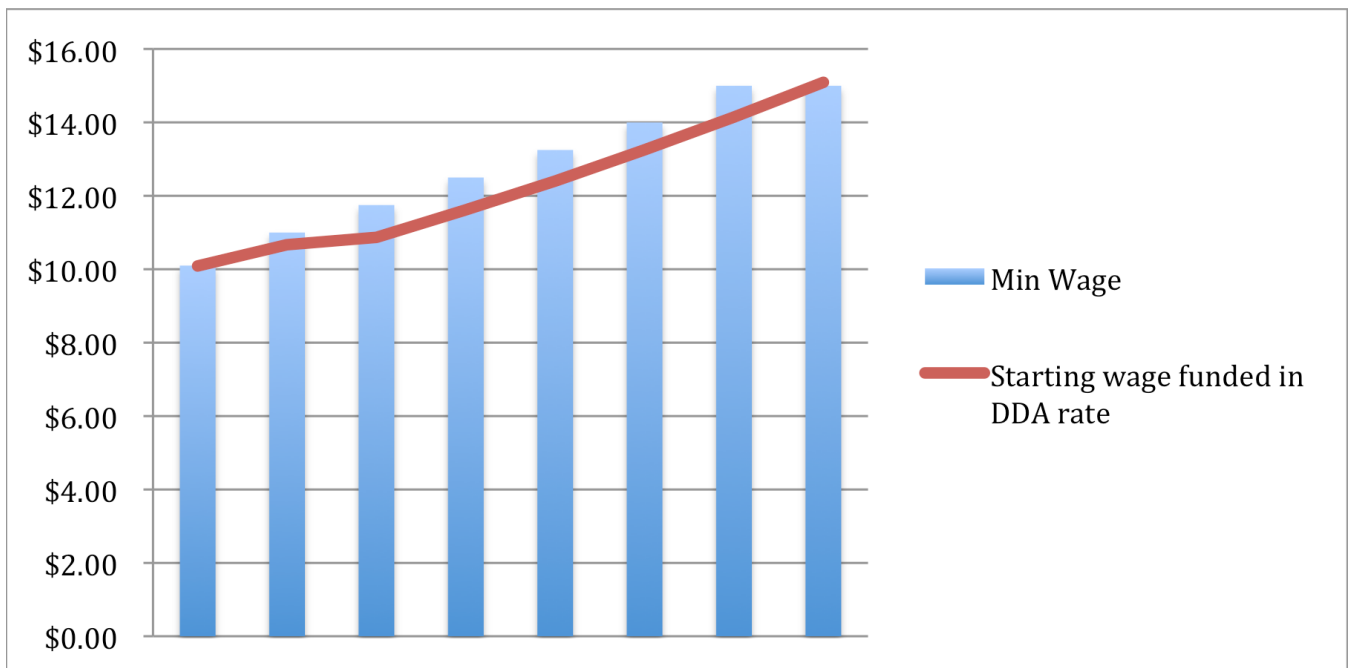
HB 152: Budget Reconciliation and Financing Act of 2020

OPPOSE THE DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES COMMUNITY SERVICES RATE DECREASE

The Maryland Developmental Disabilities Council is a public policy organization dedicated to advancing the inclusion of people with disabilities in all facets of community life. Much of the Developmental Disabilities (DD) community services delivery system is dependent upon a stable and qualified workforce to effectuate the rights of Marylanders with developmental disabilities to live full and inclusive lives. An adequate reimbursement rate is essential to recruiting and retaining the skilled staff needed to make this possible. It was for this reason that the Maryland General Assembly made a commitment to the DD community when it passed the minimum wage legislation (Fight for Fifteen) in 2019 and included language that mandated a 4% rate increase each year for four years beginning in FY20. This commitment is ever more important as the DD community grapples with high staff turnover and vacancy rates and competition for skilled staff amidst rising local and state minimum wages. The full 4% is critical to enabling direct support professionals to stay ahead of the minimum wage, and to fund the other costs necessary to provide community supports.

The system simply cannot afford a reduction in the mandated rate increase.

- With only a 2% rate increase, when the state minimum wage increases to \$11.75 on January 1, 2021, the starting wage funded by the rate is not enough to meet minimum wage. The result is a troubling destabilization of this critical workforce.



- **Direct support staff positions are not minimum wage jobs.** They must successfully complete State-mandated training, be certified by the Board of Nursing if they give any type of medication, pass a math and reading test, and undergo a criminal background check. They assist with a variety of daily activities that enable people with developmental disabilities to live and work in the community, and must make independent decisions involving the care and support of people with developmental disabilities.
- **A skilled workforce is essential facilitating the quality lives of people with developmental disabilities,** and enabling provider agencies to fulfill their statutory obligation to protect the health and safety of the individuals with disabilities they support.

The proposed rate reduction from 4% to 2% represents a \$25 million loss in General Funds alone. When matched with federal dollars, the DD community is facing a \$50 million shortfall - a shortfall that will present challenges to effectuating the other critically important aspects of the Governor's proposed budget absent the funds necessary to pay the workforce needed to carry it out.

The Maryland Developmental Disabilities Council therefore supports restoration of the full funding of the 4% rate increase.

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