



Maryland Works, Inc.

**SB796 - Support with Amendments  
“Developmental Disabilities Administration -  
Program Changes and Required Reports”**

**Written Testimony of Robert Hofmann, President & CEO, Maryland Works  
Prepared for the Senate Finance Committee  
March 6, 2020**

Good afternoon Madam Chair and Committee members. I'm Bob Hofmann, President and CEO of Maryland Works. As you may know, Maryland Works is a statewide membership association dedicated to the expansion of employment and business ownership opportunities for people with disabilities/other disadvantages.

Maryland Works supports the passage of SB796 with amendments. We suggest three amendments that are focused on strengthening DDA's commitment to employment services, supports, and funding. A fourth amendment, of a broader nature, focuses on providing service and funding stability to reduce the overwhelming and unnecessary stress on individuals and organizations as they navigate a complex change process.

We agree that there is a need to reorganize the DDA service delivery and payment system. For several years, a number of individuals and community groups, including Maryland Works, have been engaged in discussion with DDA leadership in the hope of creating a sensible and effective service delivery system that better reflects best practices in the field.

As you have likely heard, there have been many obstacles that community members have faced in the DDA reorganization process. While there are many priorities to be addressed, Maryland Works wants to ensure that the DDA systems change process does not diminish the hard-won focus and incentives to support individuals who are in paid employment or who wish to obtain paid employment.

We would like to see amendments to SB796 that are aimed at DDA following through on its commitment to guarantee that Maryland, as it claims, is an “employment first” state. We ask that language be added to SB796 to ensure that DDA:

1. Does not reduce the level of employment services and supports available to an individual service recipient and does not limit individual choice as a result of cuts to an individual's funding for at least the first year under the new funding system. This would allow individuals and families time to better plan and prepare for any necessary changes.

2. Does not reduce aggregate spending on employment related services. Employment services already represent one of the lowest funded activities within DDA's allocation of resources. Any cost savings within employment services should be applied to the expansion of opportunities for other service recipients to secure and maintain paid employment.
3. Provides retrospective and ongoing regular updates (with redaction of any personal identifying information) on individual work status (hours, wage rate, benefits, etc.) and aggregate data that is more detailed than is currently made public.

From a broader perspective, we are concerned by the lack of specifics being offered to service recipients, family members, and community service providers. It is difficult to function when one doesn't know what services they will be eligible for, how many hours of service will be provided, how they will get to and from their jobs and other community activities, among myriad other questions. And community service providers have many unanswered questions in regard to service definitions, reimbursement rates, and how to use the new electronic billing system, among other issues.

Maryland Works, therefore, recommends that DDA provide a one- to two-year "hold-harmless" for community service providers (CSP)s, whereby each CSP is assured of, at a minimum, level funding set to the highest total annual funding received within the last three fiscal years. This would enable CSPs to make the changes necessary to fully adopt the new service delivery and funding system without undue angst among service recipients, families and staff and generally without the chaos in CSP's short-term budgeting and planning processes.

In summary, we respectfully request that DDA follows through on its commitment to prioritize and fund employment related services and supports. Paid work is a well proven means of creating greater choice, empowerment, independence and pride. And we recommend that DDA implement policies and funding systems that will ensure stability for individual service recipients and community service providers as they navigate the dramatic and complex change process that is underway at DDA.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today.