



Maryland Works, Inc.

**HB984 - Support with Amendments
“Developmental Disabilities Administration -
Program Changes and Required Reports”**

**Written Testimony of Robert Hofmann, President & CEO, Maryland Works
Prepared for the House Health and Government Operations Committee
March 4, 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 passage of HB984 with amendments to strengthen DDA's commitment to employment services, supports, and funding. 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.

I'm certain that you have already heard, or will hear, of the many obstacles that community members have faced in the DDA reorganization process. Among other issues, Maryland Works is concerned that the DDA systems change process may diminish the hard-won focus and incentives to support individuals who are in paid employment or who wish to obtain paid employment.

We will offer amendments to HB984 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 HB984 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.
4. Provides a one-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, and without chaos in CSP's short-term budgeting and staffing processes.

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. We simply do not want to see backsliding in DDA's support for individuals who choose work, nor any diversion of funds out of employment services.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today.