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THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES

ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

Testimony in Support of HB 984 Developmental Disabilities Administration – Program Changes and Required Reports

Good afternoon, Chairman Pendergrass, Vice Chairman Peña-Melnyk and honorable members of the committee. Thank you for this opportunity to present **HB 984 Developmental Disabilities Administration – Program Changes and Required Reports**. This bill is needed to appropriately respond to a dysfunctional implementation of technology that directly affects the lives of some of Maryland’s most vulnerable residents and the providers who serve them.

The bottom line is that over the last several months the Developmental Disabilities Administration has been transitioning to a new software program and processes to be used for reporting and billing by small and large providers of services to individuals, primarily adults who have a range of independence but with significant needs and the system is simply not working.

The set of elements that must be integrated are complex. They include:

- Individual Person-centered Plans which define services needed
- A Fee-for-Service Program
- Transitioning the electronic software to Long Term Services and Supports recording
- Implementation of Electronic Visit Verification as required by the Federal 21st Century Cures Act

The DDA is well aware of the issues. In October, prior to implementation, Deputy Secretary Simons was sent a letter by representatives of nine members of the Maryland Association of Community Services identifying concerns to be considered before going live. The DDA went forward with implementation of a pilot program in 10 providers with 35 individuals in December; within one week of operation, representatives of The Arc Maryland, Disabilities Rights Maryland and the Maryland Association of Community Services sent a letter to Department of Health Secretary Neal with a set of concerns and a request for a meeting. In February a group of representatives from all the pilot sites sent a letter to Deputy Secretary Simons in which they identified 77 issues in the technology and the processes that seriously compromised their functionality. The FY 2020 Budget Analysis of DDA reported that “DDA lacks performance measurement and goals for the processing of Person-centered Plans” which are integral to the new processes and are required to maintain Federal funding. That same report describes how a lack of clarity about rates and fund transmissions makes it impossible to know the ultimate impact on providers—even as the system is moving forward.

Unfortunately the DDA has not made any substantive efforts to address the very serious implementation issues and there is a high likelihood that Maryland could lose Federal funds as a result of being able to effectively interoperate with the Federal requirements in 2021. The timing is now urgent.

But it is not the Federal monies that is the most significant concern—it is that the over 25,000 Marylanders who rely on these critical services are at serious risk for their quality of life in the face of many developmental challenges through the fault of governmental action—something they have no control over. We must act quickly to make sure that the systems are all working together in a way that enables the providers to meet the needs of the individuals they serve.

The recommendations in this bill are a start, but what is really required here is that the DDA and MDH work together with providers to fix the systems. We hope this bill will be the impetus for that very intentional collaboration.

Thank you for your consideration of this opportunity to provide better resources to our residents in need. I respectfully request a favorable report for HB 984.