



Maryland Developmental Disabilities Council

CREATING CHANGE • IMPROVING LIVES

Senate Budget and Taxation Committee
Senate Finance Committee

March 2, 2022

SB 636: Maryland Department of Health – Waiver Programs – Waitlist Reduction Act (End the Wait Act)
Position: Support

The Maryland Developmental Disabilities Council creates change to make it possible for people with developmental disabilities to live the lives they want with the support they need. SB 636 is a critical step to making this a reality. ***The majority of our Council members are people with developmental disabilities and parents or family members of people with developmental disabilities.*** Our Council members, and thousands of other Marylanders all need and want services and supports to live, learn, work, and play alongside Marylanders without disabilities. A variety of waiver programs help provide those services and supports, yet thousands more Marylanders are waiting for services. **SB 636 will help address that, there for the Council strongly supports.**

WHAT does this bill do?

- Requires the Department of Health to develop a plan to reduce the waitlists for waiver programs by 50%, beginning in FY 2024.
- Requires the Governor to include sufficient funds to carry out the plan in the annual budget.

WHY is this important?

- **Home and Community Based Services (HCBS) Waiver programs provide people with disabilities the support they need and want to live in their communities** instead of large, institutional settings.
- Over 42,000 people receive long term services and supports through Medicaid in Maryland. Yet, we know that many more are waiting for services. In fact, 11% of Marylanders have a disability that may qualify them for long term services and supports.¹ **SB 636 creates more opportunity and access for Marylanders to get the services and supports they need and want.**
- **Over 16,000 Marylanders with developmental disabilities rely ON services through the DDA Medicaid waivers, the community providers that provide those services, and the Department of Health, for the vital supports that enable them to live and work in their communities.** Their families are also reliant on DDA-funded services so that they can continue to work and support their families, while their loved ones with developmental disabilities have access to the supports they need and want.
- **There are long waits (many years) from the date an individual gets on a waiting list for waiver services until they are able to receive the service from the state.**

THE NEED: Almost 4,000 people stuck on the Developmental Disabilities Waiting List

- **There are currently 3,694 people on the waiting list for DDA services. Those people need services now.**
- **There are over 4,000 additional people on the DDA “future request” list.** The “future request” list is for people who may not need services or supports now, but may need them in the future.
- The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated any already existing workforce crisis. **Direct support professionals play a critical role in people’s lives.** As a result, service providers will not be able to provide the critical ongoing services and supports to Marylanders with developmental disabilities and their families. **The plan must include measures to build the capacity of providers, measures to recruit and retain providers and direct support professionals, and changes to reimbursement rates.** The clarifying sponsor amendments ensure this happens.

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Kalani Brown, *Chairperson* • Rachel London, Esq., *Executive Director*

THE NEED: Over 6,000 children and their families are waiting on the Autism Waiver Registry

- **Approximately 6,000 children are on the registry waiting for services.**
- **Almost 10,800 students in Maryland are identified as having an autism spectrum disorder.ⁱⁱ**
- **Even though research clearly shows early intervention is critical, children may spend years on the registry waiting to receive services. Many children wait for more than 10 years and may age out before they ever receive services.**

The Autism Waiver Program began in 2001 and is administered by the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE). The Waiver provides families access to Medicaid, in addition to service coordination, respite care, in-home supports, behavioral supports, parent training, home modifications, and other services, based upon the child's need. Last year, the Autism Waiver program was increased by 100 slots so that 1,300 children and their families are now supported through the Waiver. The proposed FY2023 budget includes another increase of 100 slots. **But that is not enough.**

The Council strongly supports SB 636 because it will help address the critical need for services and have a positive impact on thousands of Marylanders with developmental disabilities and their families.

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ⁱ American Community Survey estimates.

ⁱⁱ MSDE, Division of Special Education/Early Intervention Services Census Data, October 1, 2015.