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Senate Budget and Taxation Committee
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SB 636: Maryland Department of Health – Waiver Programs – Waitlist Reduction Act (End the Wait Act)

Position: **Support**
March 2, 2022

The Maryland Association of Community Services (MACS) is a non-profit association of over 100 agencies across Maryland serving people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD). MACS members provide residential, day and supported employment services to thousands of Marylanders, so that they can live, work and fully participate in their communities.

Over 18,000 Marylanders with developmental disabilities rely on services through Maryland's three DDA Medicaid waivers-- waivers that provide an array of supports that enable people with IDD to participate in community life—including residential personal, employment and other day supports. These supports are not only essential to people with IDD, but to their families who are reliant on these same services that enable them to continue to work and support their families, while their loved ones with developmental disabilities have access to the supports they need and want.

The direct support workforce is the backbone of DDA-funded supports. Without adequate staffing, the nearly 3700 Marylanders on the DDA waiting list today will remain on the list potentially for years. MACS members would welcome the opportunity to expand and support more Marylanders with IDD who want and are eligible for supports. However, the pandemic exacerbated long-standing DD workforce shortages due to historic under-funding. Without the resources to sustain a qualified workforce, it will not be possible to significantly reduce the DDA waiting list. Increased funding is *essential* to enabling providers to recruit, train and retain new staff in order to support new people. For this reason, **the plan envisioned by the bill must include measures and resources needed to build the capacity of existing providers, identify and fund measures to recruit and retain direct support professionals, assess whether there is a need to recruit new providers, and include changes to reimbursement rates needed to ensure provider capacity.**

MACS looks forward to a time when every Marylander who wants and needs DDA-funded supports will be able to access those supports when needed. Senate bill 636 is an important step in that direction and we urge a favorable report.

Respectfully submitted:

Lauren Kallins
Director of Government Relations
LKallins@macsonline.org

