



## Maryland Developmental Disabilities Council

CREATING CHANGE • IMPROVING LIVES

Senate Finance Committee

March 31, 2022

**HB 1082: Public Health – Consumer Health Information – Hub and Requirements**

Position: Support

The Maryland Developmental Disabilities Council (Council) is a statewide public policy organization that creates changes to make it possible for people with developmental disabilities to live the lives they want with the support they need. As such, **we support initiatives, laws, policies, and practices that ensure greater access and equity for people with disabilities.** HB 1082 does just that.

### **WHY is this legislation important to people with disabilities and their families?**

- **Plain language benefits everyone.** Plain language increases the likelihood that people fully understand critical information. If state and local governments use plain language in communications about health, safety, and social services benefits, more people will be better informed, effective decision-makers about their own health, safety, and services.
- **Plain language makes it easier for the public to read, understand, and use government communications.** The federal government recognizes the importance of plain language in public communications and enacted the Plain Writing Act of 2010 that requires that federal agencies use clear government communication that the public can understand and use.
- **Making information accessible to everyone is a fundamental practice of inclusion.** One of our Council members with an intellectual disability referred to this as "belonging." When she is in a meeting where people use words she doesn't understand, she feels like there isn't an effort to include her. She feels like she doesn't belong and her reaction is, "Why should I be here?"

The COVID-19 pandemic showed us that Marylanders need and want information and guidance in plain language. In fact, to address that need, the Council immediately began translating and sharing critical information in plain language. Most recently, we partnered with the Maryland Department of Health to create 7 fact sheets about COVID-19 in plain language. ([md-council.org/covid-19](http://md-council.org/covid-19)). They were also translated in 8 different languages. Thousands of Marylanders have accessed the fact sheets since they were released in December. **This clearly demonstrates the need and desire for more accessible information.**

**HB 1082 will result in a larger, more diverse group of Marylanders with access and opportunity to get the information they need in the way they need it.** It also clearly aligns with one of our objectives in our 5-year State Plan: to increase the availability of information, resources, and training to people with developmental disabilities and their families in underserved communities. For these reasons, the Maryland Developmental Disabilities Council supports HB 1082.

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