

**DATE:** Tuesday, January 25, 2022

**SUBJECT:** Senate Bill 28: Home- and Community-Based Services Waiver - Participation and Applications

**COMMITTEE:** Senate Finance Committee  
The Honorable Chair, Delores Kelley

**POSITION:** **SUPPORT**

Good afternoon Chair, Vice-Chair and members of the Senate Finance Committee!

My name is Tiffanie Love Rivers and I am here in support of Senate Bill 28 (House Bill 80) on behalf of my mother, Gayle R. Love.

I have had to take a FMLA leave, which exhausts in March, from my job to care for my mother full-time. She has cognitive impairment due to dementia, the likely result of a brain aneurysm she had the week I was born, this also was when my Mom, Gayle's, professional career ended.

As a result of also caring for my Grandmother before she passed, my Mom has no valuable assets, long-term-care, or life insurance. I bought my home here in Maryland 4 years ago to care for my Mom. I pay all the bills, but I can not afford to pay for home care as well. Are you might be aware, Prince George's County is the wealthiest Black county in the country, and yet the waitlist is one of the worst in the country! This lack of an effective process affects working families struggling to provide care and their ability to pass down assets and generational wealth to their children!

Being proactive, and seeing my Mother's decline, I applied for the Medicaid Waiver Option nearly 3 years ago. In 2-1/2 years we received no correspondence from the state of Maryland, no information regarding the application process, no suggestion that we should update Access Point as she became a level 6 (urgency), and in fact I was never informed that we were placed on a waitlist at all. I thought the questionnaire I completed with Access Point was the application for Medicaid, until this past summer 2021 I found out we were placed on a wait list. I found out because my mother had a seizure, she now needs continuous care, and supervision as she sometimes wanders out the door on her most confused days. I updated Access Point with this information during the summer.

After pressuring the state and a 2-1/2 year wait we were finally invited to apply in October. The first letter I received from the Maryland Department of Health was the invitation to apply and the application, and the second letter I received explaining the process and services was after we applied in October. Isn't that after the fact?

The correspondence also states that the state of Maryland has 6 months to process the application. We are at the halfway point, but as I am still on FMLA, with my leave running out, there has been no confirmation for Maryland that they will meet that 6-month deadline. I am not confident as even my supports planning agency cannot find out the status of the application. I am hearing Maryland is behind on applications by several months. I run out of FMLA leave time, which protects my employment, 6-weeks before Maryland's deadline.

At this time I have contacted the state of Rhode Island, where my daughter lives, and where I might be forced to relocate. Rhode Island Medicaid office staff are also working from home, however they still have a 24-hour line where someone picks up the phone. I spoke with them, they do not have this wait list Maryland has and they are processing applications within 30-90 days, sometimes faster! I do not want to relocate, it will be very disruptive for someone with dementia, but my employer now allows remote work, and my job is in jeopardy. If Maryland had met their obligations in a timely manner, our family would not be in this situation.

**Addendum:**

I want to explain the correspondence with Maryland along with the difficult deadlines for caregiving families (who are already overwhelmed):

In October we receive the invitation to apply and the application as mentioned above. We received this by mail October 13th, it was postmarked oddly on a holiday, October 11<sup>th</sup> (Columbus/indigenous People's Day). However, it was dated October 5th, with a deadline of 21 days, October 26th (but I only actually had 7 business days or I lose my spot on the wait list). Also the deadline didn't say must be postmarked within 21 days, it said received by! Due to anxiety and a desperation for services, I spent 48 hours on this application and mailed it in 2 days on October 15th. Certified mail receipt says they received it October 19<sup>th</sup>, however they state the 6-month deadline for them to process the application begins October 29th. I pulled together what became nearly 80 pages of required documentation, no one answers their phones when I had questions, paid for photocopies and certified mail, and they docked me 10 days! Each day day without care for my Mom counts!

In November, I received a request for information on November 9th, letter dated November 1st, the deadline was November 11th (again a holiday – Veterans Day!), I had 2 days and couldn't call if I had questions on the holiday. Besides all calls in MD are routed to google voice mail, call back 2 or more days later. Took hours to figure out how to register and submit the documents online via MD MyThink (no instructions were included). I requested my PIN again online, but scanning the document at home I missed the deadline by 3 hours, I submitted at 3am! The PIN to access MD MyThink was received the day after the deadline by mail, it was dated November 1<sup>st</sup> (and still no instructions on how to submit).

In December, just before the cyber attack, I contacted the MD Department of Health for a status update and they had no record of their letter sent to me or my response in November. After the cyber attack none of my calls or an email have been returned! I have no idea of the status of my application and I am running out of FMLA to protect my job!

Thank you for listening to my story and I ask that you support Senate Bill 28.

Sincerely,

Tiffanie Love Rivers  
5102 60<sup>th</sup> Ave  
Hyattsville, MD 20781  
Prince George's County  
[Love4tif@yahoo.com](mailto:Love4tif@yahoo.com)