



SENATE BILL 868
Developmental Disabilities Administration: Self-Directed Services Act
March 8, 2022
POSITION: FAVORABLE

To Chair Kelley and the Senate Finance Committee:

Pathfinders for Autism (PFA) is Maryland's largest autism organization dedicated to helping individuals, parents, and professionals find resources, support, and training while working to increase the awareness of autism spectrum disorders. We accomplish this through a variety of programs and services, all of which are offered FREE of charge. Last year our programs directly served 20,000 Maryland residents.

PFA supports Senate Bill 868 to require the Developmental Disabilities Administration to: provide Coordinators of Community Services with better training in self-direction and require them to fully orient new and current participants about self-direction annually; to reinstate Support Broker roles and increase hours available where needed; to reinstate Self-Directed Overnight Supports that were removed in 2018; to remove the prohibition to having family as staff; offer transparency in Person Centered Planning (PCP) with the ability to track; provide mileage reimbursement for specialized vehicles; remove competency requirements in favor of team support; ensure parity in budgets/services; allow for Individual Family Directed Goods & Services (IFDGS) to be more flexible per the individual's need; and to provide a progress report to the Legislature every 3 years,

According to the Developmental Disability Administration (DDA) website, people with developmental disabilities have the right to direct their lives and services. They acknowledge that self-directed services provide people with disabilities the basic human right to determine what makes a good day for them, if they want to live with others and with whom, decide what participating in the community means to them, and to decide who they want to spend time with. DDA states that these factors are the foundation of Person-Centered planning, with the goal of ensuring that people receive services to support them to have the life that they choose. Yet, DDA's policies create barriers to the Self-Directed model that are in direct opposition to what the agency claims to be fundamental rights of all people.

At its heart, the Bill addresses long standing issues of equity within DDA's Self-Directed Services model ensuring that people in disadvantaged communities, with language barriers, and without robust family supports and resources may also access Self-Directed services. Additionally, it respects an individual's fundamental right and ability to direct their services (with supports when needed) in order to live the life they choose. The Bill restores the flexibility that has been lost due to DDA's past changes. It remains in compliance with CMS rules ensuring federal matching dollars. Additionally, the changes can be achieved with no increase to current budget allocations.

I respectfully ask that you vote in favor of SB868. For more information, please contact Rebecca Rienzi, Executive Director, Pathfinders for Autism at 443-330-5370, ext. 101 or rrienzi@pfamd.org.