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Governor's Office of Community Initiatives

March 30, 2022

The Honorable Delores G. Kelley, Chair
Senate Finance Committee
3 East Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

RE: House Bill 662 -- Advisory Stakeholder Group on Autism-Related Needs, Interagency Disabilities Board, and the State Coordinator for Autism Strategy -- Membership, Staffing, and Appointment

POSITION: Letter of Information

Dear Chair Kelley and Members of the Finance Committee:

This informational letter regards the similarities and differences between **House Bill 662 -- Advisory Stakeholder Group on Autism-Related Needs, Interagency Disabilities Board, and the State Coordinator for Autism Strategy -- Membership, Staffing, and Appointment** (HB 662) and **SB 169 -- State Autism Strategy -- Revisions**, the departmental legislation that was passed out of the Finance Committee and Senate unanimously and is now scheduled for a hearing in Appropriations on April 4, 2022.

Like SB 169, HB 662 would add to the Advisory Group's membership representation from the General Assembly.

Other aspects of HB 662 are distinctly different from SB 169 in the following areas:

- HB 662 was amended in the House and would now require an annual appropriation to GOCI for one support position for the State Coordinator.

- HB 662 would not amend the existing statute by transferring Sections 7–111 and 7–112 of the Human Services Article, to Sections 9.5 –102 and 9.5–103 of the State Government Article, as would SB 169. By not transferring these sections, HB 662 would not provide additional clarity on the Advisory Group and Coordinator position by eliminating incorrect references to the Department of Disabilities related to staffing and aligning the budget appropriation with GOCl, the jurisdictional government entity;
- HB 662 would not change the annual reporting due date from July to December so that the report would align with related and companion state reporting;
- In contrast to SB 169, the Coordinator position under HB 669 would be subject to the Executive Nominations process. The Coordinator would also be added to the Interagency Disabilities Board and the Governor would be required, beginning in fiscal year 2024, to provide funding in the budget for a support staff position for the State Coordinator.
- HB 662 would not amend the Advisory Group’s administrative and leadership infrastructure to comport with similar state governmental advisory groups and commissions, particularly those already in GOCl’s portfolio.

Regarding the last bulleted item (above), HB 662 would not change the current provision that requires the Coordinator to serve as chair of the Advisory Group and would not establish a separate coordinator and chair. Having a different coordinator and chair as provided in SB 169 is consistent with the standard organizational structure of the commissions already under GOCl and comports with best practices recommended by the State Transparency and Accountability Reform Commission report on agency operations and structures issued in December of 2021 (report required by Executive Order 01.01.2020.05).

The Governor's Office of Community Initiatives requests that you consider this information regarding HB 662.

Sincerely,

Steven J. McAdams, Executive Director
Governor’s Office of Community Initiatives