



SB168- Maryland Developmental Disabilities Council – Establishment
Senate Finance Committee
February 7, 2023
Position: Support

The Arc Maryland is a statewide non-profit advocacy organization dedicated to advancing and protecting the rights and quality of life of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. The Maryland Association of Community Services (MACS) is a non-profit association of over 100 DDA-licensed agencies that provide community supports to people across the state. We support SB168 as it will establish the Maryland Developmental Disabilities (DD) Council as an independent unit of state government, outlines requirements of the Council that mirror federal law, and clarifies the purpose of the Council; to address identified needs through advocacy, system change, and capacity building efforts that promote self-determination, integration, and inclusion.

Background: There are 56 DD Councils nationally- one in every state and US territory. The Maryland Developmental Disabilities Council (MDDC) is an independent, public policy organization that creates change to make it possible for people with developmental disabilities to live the lives they want with the support they need. Currently, the MDDC is positioned under the Maryland Department of Disabilities, but this structure is not necessary, nor does it align with the independent, self-governing nature of the MDDC. The MDDC operates under a federal mandate and with federal funding, reporting directly to the Administration for Community Living of the US Department of Health and Human Services.

This bill would move the MDDC out from under the Department of Disabilities and would codify that a state entity may not interfere with the Council's work, budget, personnel, or state plan development or implementation. In fulfillment of its duties, the MDDC may advocate for a position that may not always align with the views of the Governor or the MDOD. This is why establishing the MDDC's autonomy as an independent unit is important.

The Arc Maryland and MACS partner with the MDDC on many issues, and we are members of the Developmental Disabilities Coalition. For decades we have worked cooperatively to advocate for positive systems changes for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. We place high value on our partnership and believe this bill will help to ensure the Council's autonomy and independence so they may excel; serving Marylanders with Developmental Disabilities.

Contact: Ande Kolp, Executive Director of The Arc Maryland, akolp@thearcmd.org or;
Laura Howell, Executive Director, Maryland Association of Community Services,
lhowell@macsonline.org