



House Bill 822: Maryland Medical Assistance Program - Employed Individuals With Disabilities

Testimony of Maryland Centers for Independent Living

SUPPORT

House Health & Government Operations Committee, March 6, 2024

The seven Centers for Independent Living (CIL) were established by federal law and work to ensure the civil rights and quality services of people with disabilities in Maryland. Centers for Independent Living are nonprofit disability resource and advocacy organizations located throughout Maryland operated by and for people with disabilities. CIL staff and Boards are at least 51% people with disabilities. We are part of a nationwide network which provides Information and Referral, Advocacy, Peer Support, Independent Living Skills training, and Transition Services.

The Independent Living Network submits this written testimony in strong **support** of HB 822.

The objective of the bill is to give more opportunity for individuals with disabilities to work and maintain their Medicaid health insurance. The Independent Living Network is in favor of expanding opportunities for more individuals with disabilities to use the Employed Individuals with Disabilities (EID) program.

HB 822 eliminates:

1. The upper age limit that prevents older workers from enrolling in EID. The current age limit is 64. Accordingly, current law discriminates against workers with disabilities aged 65 and older, forcing them to either avoid working so they can qualify for Medicaid without EID, or to pass up Medicaid if they do work with EID; and
2. The “marriage penalty.” Under current rules, married people who enroll in EID must often pay much higher monthly premiums than if they were single because EID currently counts a spouse’s assets and income for the individual to qualify for the program. This forces some workers with disabilities to avoid marriage so they can afford their EID premiums. Others who are already married must pay thousands of dollars more each year in premiums.

Furthermore, HB 822 improves the EID eligibility process to be more user-friendly and ensure workers can enroll in EID more easily, remain enrolled in Medicaid, and continue to receive vital services they need to live independently and work.

Passing this legislation supports people with disabilities across Maryland to gain employment and maintain their much-needed health insurance and Medicaid services.

The Maryland Independent Network strongly **supports** HB 822 and urges a **favorable** report.

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