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HOUSE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE

House Bill 822: Maryland Medical Assistance Program— Employed Individuals with Disabilities

Date: March 4, 2024

Position: Support

Disability Rights Maryland (DRM) is the protection and advocacy organization for the state of Maryland; the mission of the organization, part of a national network of similar agencies, is to advocate for the legal rights of people with disabilities throughout the state. One of the mandated purposes of DRM's legal work is to ensure that people with disabilities are included in their communities and that they have access to the supports and services that will make living and participating in community life possible. HB822 would further this goal by requiring that the Maryland Department of Health provide Maryland Medical Assistance Program services for individuals under the Employed Individuals with Disabilities (EID) Program in accordance with requirements that make this program more accessible to individuals with disabilities.

Most notably, HB822 would eliminate the income, age and asset limit for EID recipients and their spouses. Asset limits and income limits often trap beneficiaries of public assistance programs in poverty and prevent them from obtaining economic self-sufficiency because of their need to maintain their finances under a certain ceiling to qualify for benefits. Additionally, asset and income caps create a barrier that prevents individuals with disabilities who receive EID assistance from participating and being included in their communities by preventing beneficiaries from building up sufficient savings for emergencies and keeping recipients from participating in regular life milestones such as purchasing a house.

HB822 would also make the application process more accessible to individuals with disabilities, removing unclear administrative barriers that may otherwise prevent individuals from applying for much needed benefits in the first place. HB822 provides clear guidelines for eligibility and requires plain language and information be provided to applicants.

Individuals with disabilities should not have to sacrifice their ability to make a living wage and collect assets in order to receive their healthcare benefits. For these reasons, DRM supports House Bill 822.

For more information or questions, contact: Megan Jones, meganj@disabilityrightsmd.org or 443-692-2508.