

## **Testimony to the House Health and Government Operations Committee**

### **HB822 Maryland Medical Assistance Program – Employed Individuals with Disabilities**

#### **Position: Favorable**

March 3, 2024

The Honorable Joseline A. Pena-Melnyk, Chair  
Health and Government Operations Committee  
Room 241, House Office Building  
Annapolis, MD 21401  
cc: Members, Finance Committee

The Honorable Chair Pena-Melnyk and Members of the Committee:

I am the chairperson of the Maryland Statewide Independent Living Council (Maryland SILC) and am writing on behalf of the SILC in support of HB 822. We work in service of Marylanders with disabilities to ensure access on all levels of mainstream society. A person can acquire a disability at any age and disability has no age limit. HB 822 speaks to the rights of people with disabilities who work, to remain employed and keep their Medicaid coverage regardless of age.

HB 822 eliminates the upper age limit for the Employed Individuals with Disabilities (EID) Program and bases monthly premium amounts on only the applicant's income, not their spouse's. Limiting EID to people under age 65 discriminates against senior citizens. Many Marylanders who are 65 or older continue to work and should be eligible for EID. Older people with disabilities need Medicaid to cover services that enable them to live and work in the community. Many of these services - such as personal attendant services and community psychiatric rehabilitation – are not adequately reimbursed by Medicare or private insurance. Older Marylanders with disabilities need Medicaid just as much as residents under age 65.

Premiums for the EID Program should be based solely on the applicant's income, and not their spouse's. Some current EID enrollees who wish to marry are forced to avoid marriage because it would impose much higher premiums on them. Many people with disabilities cannot work in the community without the services that only Medicaid provides, and the government must support employment for

workers with disabilities by ensuring they can afford Medicaid through EID. Nondisabled spouses must pay for their own health insurance and charging higher premiums for Medicaid for disabled spouses inflicts an unfair financial burden on married workers with disabilities and their spouses.

The Maryland SILC respectfully urges you to issue a favorable report on HB 822.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Melissa Blubaugh". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal flourish at the end.

Melissa Blubaugh  
Chair, Maryland Statewide Independent Living Council (Maryland SILC)