

MDOD_SB0731_FAV_FIN_2026.03.09.docx.pdf

Uploaded by: Anne Blackfield

Position: FAV



BILL: SB 731

POSITION: FAV – Favorable

COMMITTEE: Finance

DATE: March 9, 2026

SUBMITTED BY: Maryland Department of Disabilities
217 East Redwood Street, Suite 1300, Baltimore, MD 21202

Dear Chair Beidle, Vice Chair Hayes, and Committee Members,

The Maryland Department of Disabilities is pleased to provide this letter of support for **SB 731, Human Services - Maryland Statewide Independent Living Council - Legal Status**. This bill adds language clarifying, essentially, that the Maryland Statewide Independent Living Council (MSILC) is a tax-exempt and independent entity.

SB 731 corrects an oversight from Acts 2023, Ch. 43, which codified the MSILC into state law. At the time it was signed, it was believed that Ch. 43 granted the MSILC status as a fully independent, tax-exempt entity. However, it has since been determined that additional language was needed. SB 731 adds this language and satisfies the earlier intent of Ch. 43.

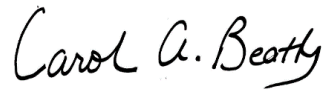
SB 731 also aligns with federal regulations governing entities such as the MSILC. The MSILC is part of a network of Statewide Independent Living Councils. These councils receive federal funding required by Title VII of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. Federal regulations at 45 C.F.R. § 1329.14(b) require statewide independent living councils to be independent from their “Designated State Entity” (which is responsible for receiving and disbursing their federal funds) and all other State agencies. The language proposed in SB 731 ensures that the MSILC’s federally required independence and autonomy is maintained.

In Maryland, the Designated State Entity is Maryland State Department of Education’s Division of Rehabilitation Services. Although MDOD does not have a formal relationship with the MSILC, we work collaboratively with the MSILC and consider them a valuable

partner. We are happy to support the MSILC's efforts to clarify its status in Maryland state law.

For these reasons, we respectfully request a **favorable report for SB 731**.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Carol A. Beatty". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Carol A. Beatty
Secretary, Department of Disabilities

SB0731 Testimony.pdf

Uploaded by: Lorna-Mae Silcott

Position: FAV



Introduction

Good afternoon, Madam Chair and members of the Senate Finance Committee. My name is Lorna-Mae Silcott and I am the Executive Director of the Maryland Statewide Independent Living Council (Maryland SILC). I am here today to testify in support of Senate Bill 0731.

Context and Mission

SILC was established by Executive Order in 1993 and is mandated by the federal Rehabilitation Act. Our mission is to ensure that Marylanders with disabilities have the resources, advocacy, and community support necessary to live independently. While we are an instrumentality of the State, our daily operations require a level of administrative flexibility that allows us to work alongside our Centers for Independent Living (CILs) to monitor and implement the State Plan for Independent Living.

The Problem: Legal Ambiguity

Currently, our legal status in the Maryland Code contains a point of ambiguity. While we function as a nonprofit entity to meet federal requirements, the lack of explicit language defining SILC as a "tax-exempt body politic and corporate" creates unnecessary administrative hurdles. This ambiguity can complicate our ability to enter contracts, manage independent audits, and secure the insurance and financial standing necessary to operate efficiently.

The Solution: SB 0731

Senate Bill 0731 provides a straightforward, technical clarification. By defining SILC as a tax-exempt body politic and corporate, this bill aligns our state legal status with our federal mandate and our practical operational needs.

This is not a change in our mission or our relationship with the State; rather, it provides the legal certainty required for us to be more agile, fiscally responsible, and effective in our service to the disability community.

Conclusion

This bill ensures that SILC can focus less on administrative gray areas and more on its core mission: advancing the independence and rights of Marylanders with disabilities. We thank the sponsors for their leadership on this technical but vital issue.

I respectfully ask the committee for a favorable report on SB 0731. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully submitted,

Lorna-Mae Silcott, Executive Director

Maryland Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC)

3-11-2026 Favorable SB0863 Special Ed Accountabili

Uploaded by: Ronza Othman

Position: FAV



Live the life you want.

From: Ronza Othman, President
National Federation of the Blind of Maryland
15 Charles Plaza, #3002
Baltimore, MD 21201 president@nfbmd.org

To: Senate Education, Energy, and Environment

The members of the National Federation of the Blind of Maryland urge the Senate Education, Energy, and Environment Committee to give a favorable report to SB863 - Prince George's County Special Education Service Delivery, Transparency, and Accountability Act.

The National Federation of the Blind of Maryland believes in the full capacity of blind and disabled people to achieve our dreams, despite the fact that many others do not. We know with proper education, opportunities, and alternative techniques, disabled people are capable of anything we set our minds to. Often the barriers to success are attitudinal—if we are not taught to believe in ourselves, we don't. Despite this, our membership includes highly-successful blind attorneys, musicians, artists, athletes, teachers, performers, STEM professionals, government workers, etc. Our journeys all begin with people who believe in us.

Often, a good attitude about disability begins in the classroom. It is true that disabled people need extra help and training when we are young. We often need one-on-one aides, extra assistive technology, mentorship to learn how we can be successful academically and beyond, etc. It is also abundantly clear how underserved disabled students are—aides do not know how to work with us, teachers and other special education professionals are inadequately-trained to deal with the incredible diversity of disabilities, and the general availability of services is quite limited. This bill will increase the availability and quality of services for disabled students, thus empowering us to achieve the currently-low expectations people have of our community—a community which contributes greatly to all sectors of employment and life. Supporting this bill is investing in a future full of opportunity for all Americans.

For those reasons and others, we ask for a favorable report on SB863. For questions, please contact me at President@nfbmd.org or at 443-426-4110.

Testimony for SB0731 TW 3.11.26.pdf

Uploaded by: Teara Winmond

Position: INFO



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Testimony of

Teara Winmond
Executive Director
Independent Marylanders Achieving Growth Through Empowerment

Before the
Maryland Senate Finance Committee
On SB0731

Informational
March 11, 2006

Madam Chair and members of the Committee,

My name is Teara Winmond, I am the Executive Director of Independent Marylanders Achieving Growth Through Empowerment (The IMAGE Center of Maryland). We support independent living for people with disabilities in Baltimore City, Baltimore County, and Harford County. I also serve as the Center for Independent Living (CIL) representative on the Maryland Statewide Independent Living Council (Maryland-SILC). I am testifying before you today to provide information on SB0731 and the effect that it can have on the Maryland-SILC and CILs and our ability to effectively support Marylanders with disabilities.

The Maryland Statewide Independent Living Council (Maryland-SILC) performs a vital role in our state, working alongside Centers for Independent Living to ensure that Marylanders with disabilities have the resources to live autonomously and with dignity within their chosen community. Maryland-SILC supports regional centers with statewide initiatives.

The problem

The current allocation of the Maryland-SILC leaves the legal status as ambiguous and does not make clear what is allowed under the current allocation.

The solution

SB0731 provides essential clarification by defining the Council as a tax-exempt body politic and corporate. While the Council has existed since 1993, formalizing this legal status in the Maryland Code ensures:

Administrative Efficiency by removing ambiguity regarding the Council's ability to enter into contracts and manage its own corporate affairs,

Financial Integrity by explicitly stating its tax-exempt status protects the funding meant for programs and advocacy rather than administrative overhead.

Alignment with Federal Law: It strengthens the Council's standing as an instrumentality of the State, as required by the federal Rehabilitation Act.

In my experience, the Maryland-SILC plays an integral role in providing statewide initiatives to raise awareness for independent living across Maryland. Redefining the Council as a tax-exempt body politic and corporate will allow access to funding like grants, private foundations, corporations and government entities. More diverse funding streams means that the council will have additional resources to support independent living in Maryland. A non-profit status will provide tax exemption status, so more funding is dedicated to programming. Ensuring the Maryland-SILC has a firm legal foundation as a non-profit, allows them to focus 100% of their energy on supporting independent living initiatives."

Conclusion

In conclusion, this bill is a request for a practical and sound change that, if approved, will provide the Maryland Statewide Independent Living Council with the legal foundation to remain focused on its mission to support Marylanders with disabilities to continue to advocate for independence and dignity.

Thank you for your time and for your support of the disability community.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Teara Winmond', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Teara Winmond
Executive Director
The IMAGE Center of Maryland