



MARYLAND DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES COALITION

Dedicated to the rights and quality of life for people with developmental disabilities in Maryland

House Judiciary Committee

HB0216: Criminal Law- Benefits Exploitation

January 27, 2026

Position: Support



The Maryland Developmental Disabilities Coalition (DD Coalition) is comprised of five statewide organizations that are committed to improving the opportunities and outcomes for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) and their families.

What this bill does:

- It prohibits a person from knowingly recruiting, harboring, transporting, or obtaining an individual for the purpose of appropriating the government benefits of an individual for the benefit of the person or another through deception, coercion, exploitation, isolation, or any other means.
- It prohibits a person from aiding, abetting, or conspiring with one or more persons to violate a certain provision of the Act, and
- It establishes that a violation of the Act is a felony.



Nationally, the financial exploitation and benefits trafficking of older adults and people with disabilities is a growing problem. Although more reports of abuse against vulnerable adults are being reported, financial exploitation cases go largely unreported; for every case of abuse that is reported, experts estimate that as many as five cases go unreported.ⁱ

Some adults with disabilities are vulnerable and at risk of a range of unfair or coercive behaviors including financial abuse. Benefits Trafficking is the recruitment, harboring, neglect, and financial exploitation of older adults and people with disabilities. Victims of Benefits Trafficking are held against their will for the purpose of obtaining their benefits, depleting their bank accounts, liquidating their assets, and holding them for continued exploitation.ⁱⁱ

The Maryland Developmental Disabilities Coalition supports HB 0216 because it closes a critical gap in Maryland law by explicitly recognizing and criminalizing the exploitation of government benefits through coercion, deception, and isolation. This form of exploitation strips individuals of their financial stability, autonomy, and dignity. This bill is an essential step toward protecting the rights, safety, and independence of people with disabilities across our state.

For additional information, contact Ande Kolp, Executive Director, The Arc MD akolp@thearcmd.org

i <https://www.md-council.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Financial-Exploitation-Fact-Sheet.pdf>

ii <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC10839064/>

