

Chapter 1

(House Bill 502)

AN ACT concerning

Office of Disability Employment Advancement and Policy and Maryland as a Model Employer Initiative – Established

FOR the purpose of establishing the Office of Disability Employment Advancement and Policy within the Department of Disabilities; establishing the Maryland as a Model Employer Initiative within the Office of Disability Employment Advancement and Policy to facilitate efforts that improve outcomes in the hiring, recruitment, retention, and advancement of people with disabilities in the State government workforce; and generally relating to the establishment of the Office of Disability Employment Advancement and Policy and the Maryland as a Model Employer Initiative.

BY repealing and reenacting, with amendments,
Article – Human Services
Section 7–114(b)
Annotated Code of Maryland
(2019 Replacement Volume and 2024 Supplement)

BY adding to
Article – Human Services
Section 7–1201 through 7–1205 to be under the new subtitle “Subtitle 12. Office of Disability Employment Advancement and Policy”
Annotated Code of Maryland
(2019 Replacement Volume and 2024 Supplement)

SECTION 1. BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF MARYLAND,
That the Laws of Maryland read as follows:

Article – Human Services

7–114.

(b) The Department shall oversee and administer the following programs and units:

- (1) constituent services and ombudsmen programs;
- (2) the Assistive Technology Guaranteed Loan Program under Subtitle 6 of this title;

(3) the Office of Personal Assistance Services, including the Attendant Care Program under Subtitle 4 of this title;

(4) Telecommunications Access of Maryland under Subtitle 8 of this title;
[and]

(5) Telecommunications Devices and Distribution of Accessible Information for Disabled Individuals under Subtitle 9 of this title; AND

(6) THE OFFICE OF DISABILITY EMPLOYMENT ADVANCEMENT AND POLICY.

SUBTITLE 12. OFFICE OF DISABILITY EMPLOYMENT ADVANCEMENT AND POLICY.

7-1201.

(A) IN THIS SUBTITLE THE FOLLOWING WORDS HAVE THE MEANINGS INDICATED.

(B) “DEPARTMENT” MEANS THE DEPARTMENT OF DISABILITIES.

(C) “INITIATIVE” MEANS THE MARYLAND AS A MODEL EMPLOYER INITIATIVE.

(D) “OFFICE” MEANS THE OFFICE OF DISABILITY EMPLOYMENT ADVANCEMENT AND POLICY.

(E) “SECRETARY” MEANS THE SECRETARY OF DISABILITIES.

7-1202.

(A) THERE IS AN OFFICE OF DISABILITY EMPLOYMENT ADVANCEMENT AND POLICY WITHIN THE DEPARTMENT.

(B) THE PURPOSE OF THE OFFICE INCLUDES:

(1) THE DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION OF STRATEGIES IN THE STATE DISABILITIES PLAN, ESTABLISHED UNDER § 7-132 OF THIS TITLE, RELATING TO THE EMPLOYMENT, TRAINING, AND CAREER-READINESS OF INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES;

(2) PERFORMING DUTIES UNDER § 7-114 OF THIS TITLE NECESSARY TO SUPPORT STATEWIDE POLICIES AND STANDARDS RELATING TO THE

EMPLOYMENT, TRAINING, AND CAREER-READINESS OF INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES;

(3) COLLECTING INFORMATION AND DATA FROM UNITS OF STATE GOVERNMENT RELATING TO THE EMPLOYMENT, TRAINING, AND CAREER-READINESS OF INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES, IN ACCORDANCE WITH § 7-115 OF THIS TITLE; AND

(4) IMPLEMENTING THE MARYLAND AS A MODEL EMPLOYER INITIATIVE, ESTABLISHED UNDER § 7-1205 OF THIS SUBTITLE.

(C) BEGINNING IN FISCAL YEAR 2027, THE GOVERNOR MAY INCLUDE IN THE ANNUAL BUDGET BILL AN APPROPRIATION OF \$250,000 FOR THE OFFICE.

7-1203.

THE SECRETARY MAY ADOPT REGULATIONS AS NECESSARY TO CARRY OUT THE PROVISIONS OF THIS SUBTITLE.

7-1204.

THIS SUBTITLE MAY NOT BE CONSTRUED TO ESTABLISH AN ENTITLEMENT PROGRAM.

7-1205.

(A) BEGINNING JULY 1, 2026, THE OFFICE SHALL BE RESPONSIBLE FOR IMPLEMENTATION AND OVERSIGHT OF THE MARYLAND AS A MODEL EMPLOYER INITIATIVE.

(B) THE PURPOSE OF THE INITIATIVE SHALL INCLUDE:

(1) PROMOTING THE RECRUITMENT, HIRING, RETENTION, AND CAREER ADVANCEMENT OF PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES ACROSS STATE GOVERNMENT;

(2) CONDUCTING AND COORDINATING OUTREACH TO JOB SEEKERS WITH DISABILITIES AND STATE GOVERNMENT TO ENCOURAGE PARTICIPATION IN THE INITIATIVE;

(3) DEVELOPING AND DELIVERING TRAININGS TO STATE AGENCIES AND UNITS ADDRESSING BEST PRACTICES, RESOURCES, AND RELEVANT FEDERAL AND STATE LAWS PERTAINING TO THE EMPLOYMENT OF PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES;

(4) ASSISTING STATE GOVERNMENT AGENCIES AND UNITS TO ATTRACT QUALIFIED JOB SEEKERS WITH DISABILITIES TO AVAILABLE POSITIONS;

(5) PROMOTING ACCESS TO AND ACQUISITION OF ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY FOR NEW STATE EMPLOYEES WITH DISABILITIES;

(6) EVALUATING STATE EMPLOYMENT PRACTICES AND POLICIES AND MAKING RECOMMENDATIONS REGARDING WAYS TO REDUCE BARRIERS FOR JOB SEEKERS AND EMPLOYEES WITH DISABILITIES;

(7) COLLECTING FROM EACH UNIT OF STATE GOVERNMENT, AS PART OF THE PLANS REQUIRED UNDER § 7-116 OF THIS TITLE, PERFORMANCE GOALS RELATED TO HIRING AND RETENTION EFFORTS FOR EMPLOYEES WITH DISABILITIES AND ANY DATA DEEMED NECESSARY BY THE SECRETARY TO DEMONSTRATE PERFORMANCE OUTCOMES; AND

(8) REPORTING ON THE INITIATIVE'S OUTCOMES IN COMPLIANCE WITH SUBSECTION (C) OF THIS SECTION.

(C) ON OR BEFORE DECEMBER 1, 2026, AND EACH DECEMBER 1 THEREAFTER, THE OFFICE SHALL REPORT TO THE GOVERNOR AND THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY, IN ACCORDANCE WITH § 2-1257 OF THE STATE GOVERNMENT ARTICLE, ON:

(1) PROGRESS AND OUTCOMES OF THE INITIATIVE; AND

(2) RECOMMENDATIONS DEVELOPED BY THE INITIATIVE FOR CONTINUED IMPROVEMENT OF STATE GOVERNMENT EMPLOYMENT PRACTICES FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES.

SECTION 2. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That this Act shall take effect July 1, 2025.

Approved by the Governor, April 8, 2025.