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Senate Budget and Taxation Committee
HB0152: Budget Reconciliation and Financing Act
Position: Oppose

The Arc Maryland is the largest statewide advocacy organization dedicated to the rights and quality of life of children and adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities and their families.

With our colleagues, we respectfully request the rejection of the 2% cut to Developmental Disabilities funding from the 4% the DDA community needs. DDA and other Medicaid providers that are responsible for supporting tens of thousands of Marylanders with disabilities were promised 4% at minimum from this body, in acknowledgment of the critical services we provide and the fact that Medicaid providers are reliant on state funding to do the work of the state. When costs associated with implementing the minimum wage law go up, there needs to be funding to address those costs and 2% is not enough.

Providers are already struggling after years of insufficient funding. I believe you have seen our graphs over the years which show how the funding for DDA services has eroded, not keeping pace with the costs of doing business in Maryland. I know of at least two families who have recently told me their DD provider has not been picking up their adult children from their home for day services, due to direct support professional vacancies. I also know of a provider organization has exhausted their line of credit with the bank and is selling a building but even with those efforts, they do not believe they will be able to scrape together enough to make payroll in less than 4 weeks. I am terrified as I think about these situations and wonder how many other situations like these we don't know about.

The DD community cannot wait for the increase in funding that was promised and any delay in receiving the increase or plan to disseminate the increase to only certain services would be detrimental. We need a 4% increase beginning July 1, 2020. We need to do our best to stabilize a very fragile yet critical system.

Perhaps one of the groups that will suffer the most, if things don't change, are the transitioning youth. For years, we have watched the slow decline of TY admissions to DD adult provider organizations, often for reasons of "capacity." It isn't that providers don't have space or vacancies. Capacity, I have found, relates to a provider's inability to make new commitments to support people when they feel they cannot meet the commitments they have already made to care for existing people in their programs. It has gotten bad.

I spoke with a father in Anne Arundel county last month whose son graduated from high school in June 2019, just this past year. Prior to graduation, he and his wife went to 10 different providers and all declined to support his son, many citing his son's need for diabetes management and a lack of nursing funding and provider expertise to properly support the young man. After graduation, this father and his wife spent about a month more trying to find a provider before being forced to consider Self-Directed services for their son. It is not what they wanted but they were out of options. They developed the Self-directed services

budget and submitted it but as of last month, they were still waiting for that budget to be finalized. His wife had to quit work. She had no choice since their son cannot be alone for any great length of time and they were well out of protected time to take off. This is one story of many I heard during our 8 stop Listening Tour throughout Maryland.

The system cannot withstand the cut to the promised increase of 4% through the Minimum Wage bill of 2019. We respectfully ask for the rejection of this recommended cut in the BRFA.

Respectfully submitted,
Ande Kolp
Executive Director