



State of Maryland
Telecommunications Access of Maryland
MD Relay

Department of Information Technology

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Lieutenant Governor

MICHAEL G. LEAHY
Secretary
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DAVID J. BAHAR
Director

DATE: March 10, 2020

BILL: Senate Bill 851: Human Services - Department of Disabilities - Accessibility Programs

COMMITTEE: House Health and Government Operations Committee

POSITION: Letter of Support

RE: *Written Testimony for Senate Bill 851*

Good afternoon, Chair Kelley, Vice Chair Feldman, and members of the Senate Finance Committee,

I open with a note of gratitude to the Department of Information Technology for the support it has provided to TAM division over the years. Fundamentally, DoIT and TAM's missions not the same: DoIT is internal-facing, supporting state agencies, while TAM is external-facing, with outreach staff attending over 300 events across the state every year, the MAT program conducting hundreds upon hundreds of visits to the homes of clients to provide accessible telecommunications evaluations and install services, and Maryland Relay serving close to 100,000 calls a year from Marylanders.

The Maryland Department on Disabilities is, like TAM, a public-facing entity and provides services directly to Marylanders. This is far from the first time TAM and MDOD are working together: the Maryland Accessible Telecommunications (MAT) program was established, per Maryland law, in collaboration with MDOD. MDOD's Technology Access Program (MDTAP) also provides TAM with assistive telecommunications evaluations services in seven Maryland counties as well as Baltimore City.

I am also grateful to MDOD's commitment to incorporating the recommendations given to them by the Governor's Advisory Board for Telecommunications Relay (GABTR) to improve TAM's ability to serve Marylanders. MDOD and DoIT could easily have accomplished this transfer through a departmental bill without taking crucial steps to improve the TAM program for future generations. Instead, they took the path of supporting TAM and the constituencies it serves by introducing a private bill containing all but one of the recommendations shared by GABTR. For these reasons, I urge a favorable report for this legislation. Thank you very much.

Very Truly Yours,

David J. Bahar
Director, Telecommunications Access of Maryland