



House Bill 10 – Public Buildings – Changing Facilities
Position: Support with Amendments
January 29, 2020
Health & Government Operations Committee

The Prince George's Provider Council is a membership organization comprised of over thirty agencies that provide supports and services to individuals with intellectual or developmental disabilities in Prince George's County. Together they support more than 2,500 individuals who live in the County through a variety of services. Our Provider Council works to promote quality services and collaboration among the member agencies as well as best practices trainings which are scheduled on a quarterly basis and provided free to the staff of member agencies. In addition, we have a committee working on the issue of community inclusion as we strive to increase the opportunities for those we support to live meaningful lives in the communities of their choice where they can fully participate in recreational service, religious services, employment or skills training and all other activities of their choice. Often this is done through the support of Provider agency Direct Support Professionals who are the backbone of our agencies and without whom there would not be any community services.

People with developmental disabilities generally want the same opportunities to leave their homes and to participate in community activities that are afforded to people without disabilities. They tend to want to do the same or similar activities as the rest of us such as work, attend movies, shop, and enjoy community life. However, they are often met with barriers which negatively impact their achievement of such goals. One of these barriers is what this proposed legislation attempts to begin addressing. Since many adults with disabilities need restrooms which can accommodate personal hygiene assistance and a more accessible facility. The lack of such facilities often limits their opportunities to fully participate in their choice as well as to often limit the time they can spend at an activity or results in a great deal of creativity to provide such assistance such as utilizing back seats of the car, on the floor in a restroom or even on the grass or in parking lots which is not only inconvenient but also lacks privacy and dignity.

The proposed legislation will begin to address this barrier and seeks to do so in a manner which does not place an undue burden on the public facility. In many instances, with some planning, family restrooms, which are now much more common, can be structured to be in such a manner to accommodate a table large enough to accommodate an adult and also have room for a wheelchair. Since the legislation does not require or mandate changes in existing structures unless major renovation or new construction, this should also serve to minimize the fiscal cost.

While previously noted that our membership and other providers support 2,500 or more individuals with developmental disabilities in our County, this number is estimated to be less than 40% of the population of people with disabilities. As we all know and has been documented nationally, the majority of care givers are family members; particularly parents who are aging. This is mirrored in our County.

The Prince George's Provider Council strongly supports this proposed legislation as amended as an important first step in assuring full access in communities throughout Maryland. It will also move Maryland into a leadership position among only three other states which have enacted similar legislation. By the passage of this legislation, Maryland will be providing not only access but also privacy and dignity to all individuals needing any type of personal hygiene assistance including veterans with disabilities, and senior citizens.

The Prince George's Provider Council respectfully requests the favorable report on HB 10 Public Buildings- changing Facilities as amended.

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