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MEMBER ORGANIZATIONS

Abilities Network
The Arc
Prince George's County
Ardmore Enterprises
CALMRA
Cerenity
CHI Centers
Compass
Divine Connect Care
Dominion Residence
EBED
EPIC
Family Service Foundation
Full Citizenship MD
Independence Now
Lt JP Kennedy Inst
Living Hope
MD Community Connection
MD Neighborly Network
MedSource Community Services
Melwood
MMARS-RC
Metro Homes HealthCare
NCIA
New Horizons Support Services
Opportunities Inc
Resource Connections
SEEC
Service Coordination Inc
Sunrise Community of MD
Total Care Services
United Community Supports
V & T Residential
VOCA/ResCare
Work Opportunities

Honorable Shane Pendergrass, Chair
House Health and Government Operations Committee
6 Bladen Street
House Office Building
Annapolis, MD 20401

HB10-Public Buildings-Changing Facilities

Dear Chairman Pendergrass and Committee Members:

The Prince George's Provider Council is a membership organization of over thirty agencies providing services and supports for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities and this letter to express our full support of HB10 as amended by the sponsor.

The Provider Council works to support all of its member agencies in a variety of ways; in the spring of 2019, our organization brought together a new committee to discuss best practices around how to create inclusive opportunities in the community for those that we support. As we worked to identify barriers to this inclusion, one of the key barriers that was noted among the committee was the lack of access to restrooms, anywhere in the community, that provided the proper equipment to effectively assist individuals with their personal care and hygiene needs. The lack of proper equipment leads to a lack of privacy and dignity for those that we support when they need to use a restroom in the community. This is an important reason we are strongly in support of HB10 as amended.

Many agencies within the Provider Council, and across the state, are moving toward providing services and supports in settings where individuals can experience all their communities have to offer. Many are seeking employment, or are employed, while others are seeking opportunities to volunteer or engage in recreational activities such as shopping, going to the movies, visiting parks, etc. For individuals that require the use of a changing station, activities such as these are often not an option to engage in. The lack of restrooms with changing stations capable of supporting the weight of those that require assistance with personal hygiene is a problem. Simply put, these individuals are not able to access, or be included in, activities that promote their inclusion within the community. These individuals are restricted in where they can go, and also how long they are able to be out in the community. This is not inclusive.

This issue transcends beyond provider agencies, and also has significant impact on the families of individuals affected by a lack of changing facilities in the community. We have heard from family members that have told us about the tremendous challenges that they face when their loved one is with them while

out in the community. These family members want to include their loved ones in all aspects of family outings, however they are often torn because they realize that the family outing can result in the need to use the back seat of a car, or the floor of a public restroom, to assist the person with personal care. The impact of having available changing stations in public places would be immeasurable for the families we have talked with.

We would also point out that there are millions of other individuals who experience urinary incontinence that might also require this level of access to restrooms and statistics show this number is increasing as our population ages. This should not be a limit to their continued participation in the community activities of their choice.

The proposed legislation will begin to expand important resources in communities across the State of Maryland and will be an excellent first step. It is for this reason we are writing in support of HB10 and its companion bill SB44. We respectfully request that the committee submit a favorable report on HB10 as amended. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Robert Baynard, Vice Chair
Prince George's Provider Council &
Chair, Community Inclusion Committee