

Senate Bill 473 - Discrimination in Employment -
Reasonable Accommodations for Applicants With Disabilities
SUPPORT TESTIMONY

I am testifying in support of this bill because it allows accommodation during a job interview for persons with so called hidden disabilities. Let me give you an example of a problem and how permitting the assistance of a support professional like a job coach can be a solution.

Our daughter is on the autism spectrum. During an interview—or any conversation—she is likely to give specific and only brief answers to questions. Additionally, she may have difficulty providing good and creative answers to open ended and abstract questions. She also has a mild language processing delay affecting both hearing and speech. Thus, she may miss words or phrases in long questions and often hesitates and stumbles in her oral response.

A job coach can be a second set of ears to offer accommodation. He could prompt her to add details and additional examples to a reply. She could rephrase complex questions into more manageable parts. The coach could repeat a long question or a series of questions.

Our daughter began her academic career in Montgomery County Public Schools. She was in self contained classrooms through elementary school, but by high school graduation had completed two Advanced Placement classes! Hood College in Frederick awarded her an academic scholarship. She graduated in 4 years with a 3.6 GPA. In the 8½ years since her college graduation in 2011 she has been employed *for only about 2 years*, despite numerous interviews. Including many interviews with the State of Maryland during which she was denied the active assistance of a job coach.

The State of Maryland needs to expand their support of citizens with all types of disabilities so they can be competitive in the job market. Help them so they can support themselves with skill appropriate employment, instead of being un- or underemployed and receiving Medicaid or other types of relief. Pass this Bill.

And then, I urge you to begin considering how the State of Maryland can take the next logical and reasonable step: facilitate employment for clients of its own Division of Rehabilitation Services. Clients like my daughter. Surely citizens receiving state services should be offered non-competitive interviews for State jobs if they fully qualify. Let the State of Maryland use its resources proactively, yet frugally, to help their citizens with disabilities find appropriate employment

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