



SENATE BILL 441
Developmental Disabilities Administration: Self-Directed Services
(Self-Direction Act)
February 12, 2021
POSITION: SUPPORT

Pathfinders for Autism (PFA) is Maryland's largest autism organization dedicated to helping individuals, parents, and professionals find resources, support, and training while working to increase the awareness of autism spectrum disorders. We accomplish this through a variety of programs and services, all of which are offered FREE of charge. Last year our programs directly served 19,300 Maryland residents.

PFA supports House Bill 318 to create an advisory council to re-establish the principles of self-direction and create accountability; allow participants to continue to include family members as support staff; restore participants right to choose a support broker as their primary advocate; ensure participant choice and control of all services; and mandate that anyone eligible for DDA service may self-direct if they choose.

According to the Developmental Disability Administration (DDA) website, people with developmental disabilities have the right to direct their lives and services. They acknowledge that self-directed services provide people with disabilities the basic human right to determine what makes a good day for them, if they want to live with others and with whom, decide what participating in the community means to them, and to decide who they want to spend time with. DDA states that these factors are the foundation of Person-Centered planning, with the goal of ensuring that people receive services to support them to have the life that they choose.

Yet, DDA's policy changes to the Self Directed waiver are in direct opposition to what the agency claims to be fundamental rights of all people. These changes will eliminate and restrict Self Directed participants choices and are the antithesis of self-determination.

Specifically, these changes will: Eliminate of overnight support from trusted employees for people with intense needs; eliminate individualized transportation arrangements; eliminate choice and completion for essential fiscal management services; restrict customized goods and services; restrict who is eligible to self-direct; restrict who the participant team's choice to hire family members; and restrict the participants access to support broker- the only professional on the team with a fiduciary duty to the person. The use of provider rates to determine self-directed budgets is fiscally irresponsible as it may overfund many participants while underfunding others. Additionally, research shows that self-directed services cost, on average, 25% less than traditional provider-based services.

I respectfully ask that you vote in favor of SB441. For more information, please contact Rebecca Rienzi, Executive Director, Pathfinders for Autism at 443-330-5370 or rrienzi@pfamd.org.