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In Favor of the SB441, The Self-Direction Act
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To Senator Lee and the Finance Committee:

I write on behalf of our son, Robert, and the individuals who participate in the Self-Directed Services program administered by Maryland's Developmental Disabilities Administration. Please support SB411, The Self-Direction Act. I am in support the positions of the Self-Directed Advocacy Network of Maryland, Inc, SDAN, on this Act. See SDAN FAQs: <https://tinyurl.com/yryf7op4>

As a parent, I am concerned about DDA's system wide transformation and radical changes to waiver language and policy and restrictive rules being applied by DDA Maryland. I am concerned about the continuation of the Self-Directed Program for individuals like my son.

Maryland self-direction has been available since circa 2004. ALL DDA participants should have self-determination in their plan whether supports are provider managed or completely participant managed. The DDA should provide ease for participants with their circle of supports to move to a more self-determination model no matter which support services are selected.

As the founder and director of an advocacy group in Montgomery County, <https://groups.io/g/MCTransitions>, we have over 560 members in our e-group and over 225 on our Facebook site, <http://www.facebook.com/groups/MCTransitions/> . Most participants and their families need a lot of support for services. We are grateful for the combination of DDA State support, family and local support needed to help DDA participants.

Our son, Robert, now 35, with the support of the DDA Community Pathways Waiver, Self-Directed Services, SSDI, other county and private services, is able to live an independent life and integrated into his community as follows:

- Works a part-time retail job at 25 hours a week at Goodwill Rockville, which he has held since October 2020. Worked at Big Lots in Gaithersburg previously
- Lives in his own apartment at 200 Olde Towne Gaithersburg with help of a Housing Opportunity Voucher. He is also in District 17.
- Loves animals and volunteered at the MCPAWS for a number of years.
- Works out regularly in his neighborhood with help of his Self-Directed Staff.
- Meets with 7 other self-advocates to work on daily living skills and social activities thru a vendor contract for part-time staff thru the Integrated Living Opportunities (<http://www.ilonow.org>) in which we are a participating family.
- With support of his team, selects his own staff and vendors to assist him to live successfully in his own apartment and in the community.

- Values the ability to change team staff and vendors as needs change.
- Values the flexibility of the Self-Direction program that can change with his needs allowing him the independence to mature at his speed.
- Values continuing his life during the COVID Pandemic because of Self-Direction Services, with the help of staff to maintain health standards, allowing him to continue his job and many virtual meetings with his peer group thru Integrated Living Opportunities and other resources.

Picture of Robert at MCPAWS at his volunteer assignment working with one of their dogs. The other picture is of Robert and his loved cat Brocade, who died in 2018. Thru his DDA Self-Directed Waiver, staff works with Robert so he can live, work and volunteer in his community.

