



THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

Testimony in Support of HB 318 Developmental Disabilities Administration - Self-Directed Services (Self-Direction Act)

Madam Chair, Madam Vice Chair and esteemed members of the Health and Government Operation Committee,

HB 318 establishes a State Advisory Council on Self-Directed Services for persons living with developmental disabilities by specifying the composition of the council's members, defines their terms of service, and outlines their research and reporting responsibilities. This council will guarantee that beneficial self-directed services remain intact for individuals living with developmental disabilities.

In 2005, Maryland created the New Directions Waiver, an Independence Plus program, so that individuals with developmental disabilities could direct their own lives, allocate their funding, and hire their own employees. This Independence Plus program affirmed the participants' right to choose family members as employees.

Then in 2013, Maryland merged the Independence Plus program with Community Pathways, creating one waiver for persons living with developmental disabilities. Since then, significant changes to self-direction options have taken place through amendments to the "Community Pathways Waiver." These changes have strayed from the intentions of the original model for self-directed services by constricting freedom of choice, diminishing access to needed services, and limiting control for participants.

HB 318 restores the original intent of the Independence Plus program to Maryland's current self-directed option. The bill's primary thrust is to create a strong State Advisory Council which will protect the right to self-determination by revising the waiver that governs self-directed services. The Council will work with DDA and conclude its revisions by July 1, 2022. **HB 318** will also restore other foundational Independence Plus principles. It will ensure the right of any person with developmental disabilities to choose to self-direct, the persons' right to choose family members as staff, and the persons' right to choose a professional support broker as their fiduciary. Since

self-direction has a proven history of cost-savings for the state, **HB318** will not only protect the rights of people with disabilities but ensure savings of precious state funds.

HB 318 empowers participants to live the life they choose, learn new skills, develop talents, and experience greater independence with support from family members and professionals. Self-directed care is individualized care that is flexible and adaptable to the changing needs of participants. It is care that builds on the strengths of each participant and addresses their individual needs.

For these reasons, I urge you to support **HB 318**, and I request a favorable report.

Thank you,



Delegate Karen Lewis Young