



**Maryland Developmental
Disabilities Council**

EMPOWERMENT • OPPORTUNITY • INCLUSION

House Health and Government Operations Committee

January 14, 2021

HB 321: Public Buildings – Changing Facilities - Requirements

Position: Support

The Maryland Developmental Disabilities Council (DD Council) is a statewide public policy organization that promotes the full inclusion of people with developmental disabilities in all aspects of community life by eliminating barriers, creating opportunities, empowering people, and promoting innovation. The DD Council is led by people with developmental disabilities and their families. From that perspective, the DD Council supports HB 321.

It is well accepted and expected that all people have a right to live in the community, access all facilities, and meaningfully participate in all activities. That right is significantly limited for people with the most significant disabilities. Some people with significant disabilities, of all ages, require assistance with personal care throughout their lifetimes. Yet, very few changing facilities suitable for children over the age of 4 and for the personal care needs of adults exist. As a result, families of children and adults with disabilities who require personal care and support are forced to significantly limit outings or stay home.

The DD Council understands it costs more and may require more space to install changing facilities suitable for children and adults; however, **the benefits to increased accessibility for more Marylanders impact not only people with disabilities and their families, but society as a whole.** Access to changing facilities in renovated or new state buildings will provide more people the opportunity to:

- Be fully integrated
- Serve the public interest
- Meaningfully participate in their communities
- Work alongside people without disabilities

In order to ensure access and opportunity for all of Maryland's citizens, including those with significant support needs, it is critical to address the most basic personal care needs of children and adults with disabilities. **The DD Council strongly supports HB 321 so that people with disabilities and their families are not limited in their ability to fully engage in and their communities.**

Maryland should join the 5 other states (Arizona, California, Florida, Georgia, and New Hampshire) that have passed similar requirements and the 11 other states that are considering similar legislation. It is a critical next step to facilitate everyone's personal care needs and ensure the inclusion of all people in all facets of community life.

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