



MARYLAND DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES COALITION

Dedicated to the rights and quality of life for people with developmental disabilities in Maryland

Health Health and Government Operations Committee

March 2, 2021

HB 1258: Health Enterprise Zones – Established (Restoring the Promise Act of 2021) Letter of Information



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The Maryland Developmental Disabilities Coalition is comprised of five statewide organizations that are committed to improving the opportunities and outcomes for Marylanders with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD).



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The DD Coalition applauds any effort to expand supports and services for people on the DDA Waiting List.

- 6,310 people with IDD are on the waiting list, waiting for services and supports. (as of December 20, 2020). Many of these individuals have been on the waiting list for more than a decade.



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This bill, among other things would require a \$68 million appropriation in FY23 to the Waiting List Equity Fund to provide services to “individuals eligible for, but not receiving, services from the Developmental Disabilities Administration.” While critical, in order to serve people from the waiting list, we must first ensure that our community systems of support have the capacity to support *more* people, including a sufficient workforce of Direct Support Professionals, while continuing to provide quality supports to the 18,000 people already using DDA-funded services.

In addition, DD Coalition members and the Developmental Disabilities Administration (DDA) have discussed different uses for the Waiting List Equity Fund and ways in which the process and use needs to change. These recommendations will require statutory changes that are likely to be before the General Assembly in 2022.



Maryland Developmental
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The COVID-19 pandemic has created unprecedented and unique challenges for people with developmental disabilities, their families, and community providers. Many providers closed or reduced capacity in day programs and moved to smaller group and individual support models. Due to pandemic-related closures of many community businesses, unemployment, and movement of classes and other activities to virtual-only platforms, people with IDD who previously received supports in community settings, worked, or attended in-person classes and activities have been supported during the pandemic primarily in their homes. This shift has increased staffing requirements for providers of residential services and supports.



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DDA-licensed community services are only possible because of the dedication of the staff whose supports enable people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) to live meaningful, inclusive lives in their communities. **A strong, well-funded workforce to support people with developmental disabilities is critical. This pandemic has exacerbated already existing workforce crisis.** In fact, in a sample survey of provider organizations in Maryland:

- 38% fewer people applied to work as a direct support professional in the second quarter of FY21 than in FY20.
- Only 7% of workers were hired from all applicants in FY21, compared to 12% in FY20.
- The average vacancy rate increased from 15% in FY19 to 18% in FY20.

We remain deeply concerned that service providers will not be able to provide critical ongoing services and supports, let alone increase the number of people they support.

We support the elimination of the DDA waiting list so that all eligible people with IDD receive the services and supports they need to live and work in their communities. However, we are concerned that initiatives to reduce or eliminate the waiting list may not be successful right now, and will instead amount to empty promises to thousands of people who need and want access to services and supports. The Coalition is grateful to the bill sponsor for his commitment to people with developmental disabilities, and is committed to working on the issue in the interim so that Maryland can successfully serve and support more people with intellectual disabilities, and tackle the waiting list.

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