



## GOVERNOR'S COORDINATING OFFICES

Community Initiatives · Service & Volunteerism · Deaf & Hard of Hearing  
Crime Prevention, Youth, & Victim Services · Small, Minority, & Women Business Affairs  
Banneker-Douglass Museum · Grants · Volunteer Maryland

### Governor's Office of Community Initiatives

April 4, 2022

The Honorable Maggie McIntosh, Chair  
Appropriations Committee  
Room 121, House Office Building  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

**RE: Senate Bill 169 - State Autism Strategy – Revisions**

**POSITION: Favorable**

Dear Chair McIntosh and Members of the Appropriations Committee:

The Governor's Office of Community Initiatives (GOCI) submits this letter of support for **Senate Bill 169, State Autism Strategy - Revisions**. Senate Bill 169 is departmental legislation which passed the Senate unanimously. It is similar to **House Bill 662 -- Advisory Stakeholder Group on Autism-Related Needs, Interagency Disabilities Board, and the State Coordinator for Autism Strategy -- Membership, Staffing, and Appointment**, a bill this committee passed earlier this session. This letter describes the provisions of Senate Bill 169 and the similarities and differences with House Bill 662.

SB 169, like HB 662, would add to the Advisory Group's membership representation from the General Assembly.

Other aspects of HB 662 are distinctly different from SB 169 in the following areas:

- HB 662 was amended in the House and would now require an annual appropriation to GOCI for one support position for the State Coordinator;
- SB 169 would amend the existing statute by transferring Sections 7–111 and 7–112 of the Human Services Article, to Sections 9.5–102 and 9.5–103 of the State Government Article, which relate to the Governor's Office of Community Initiatives. HB 662 would not

transfer these provisions. By not transferring these sections, HB 662 would not provide additional clarity on the Advisory Group and Coordinator position by eliminating incorrect references to the Department of Disabilities related to staffing and aligning the budget appropriation with GOCl, the jurisdictional government entity;

- In contrast to SB169, the Coordinator position under HB 662 would be subject to the Executive Nominations process. The Coordinator would also be added to the Interagency Disabilities Board and the Governor would be required, beginning in fiscal year 2024, to provide funding in the budget for a support staff position for the State Coordinator; and
- Unlike SB 169, HB 662 would not amend the Advisory Group's administrative and leadership infrastructure to comport with similar state governmental advisory groups and commissions, particularly those already in GOCl's portfolio.

Regarding the last bulleted item (above), SB 169 provides that the chair of the Advisory Group be appointed by the Governor from among the Advisory Group's members. HB 662 would not change the current provision that requires the Coordinator to serve as chair of the Advisory Group and would not establish a separate Coordinator and chair. Having a different Coordinator and chair as provided in SB 169 is consistent with the standard organizational structure of the commissions already under GOCl and comports with best practices recommended by the State Transparency and Accountability Reform Commission report on agency operations and structures issued in December of 2021 (report required by Executive Order 01.01.2020.05).

The Governor's Office of Community Initiatives requests a favorable report on Senate Bill 169..

Sincerely,

Steven J. McAdams, Executive Director  
Governor's Office of Community Initiatives