

ECONOMIC MATTERS COMMITTEE**January 25, 2022****HB 78 – Discrimination in Employment – Reasonable Accommodations for Applicants with Disabilities****Position: SUPPORT**

Disability Rights Maryland (DRM – formerly Maryland Disability Law Center) is the Protection & Advocacy agency in Maryland, mandated to advance the civil rights of people with disabilities. DRM works to increase opportunities for Marylanders with disabilities to be part of their communities by advocating for economic justice through eliminating and reducing barriers to employment for people with disabilities.

DRM supports HB 78. Because of our daily work with the disability community, we are familiar with the employment barriers that people with disabilities experience daily. Some of these barriers include inaccessible workplaces, lack of appropriate transportation to work, and failure to make reasonable accommodations for pre-employment, work training, and working at the workplace. Because of these barriers, only about 1/3 of people with disabilities participate in the workforce nationwide.¹

Disability does not mean “inability.” It is important for employers to understand that disabled individuals can work a regular job but may need accommodations to assist them in being able to work effectively, and access. This duty to accommodate is important in recognizing the value people with disabilities offer to employees, and it is also the law.

HB 78 expands this important right to accommodation to the employment application context. It is important for accommodations to be made during the pre-employment phase to increase employment of people with disabilities. For example, transitioning students in the education system may need assistance with completing online job applications or have a parent or staff support them in a job interview. Individuals with autism may not be able to answer on the spot questions and may need to prepare for interview questions ahead of time. Communication devices may need to be used for the individual to be able to communicate effectively during the interview. These types of accommodations will allow individuals with disabilities to be able to access community employment and be able to work in an inclusive environment.

For these reasons DRM urges a **favorable** report on **HB 78**.

Please do not hesitate to contact me at saram@disabilityrightsmd.org or by phone at 410-727-6352, ext. 2602

¹ US Department of Labor, Office of Disability Employment Policy, Disability Employment Statistics, *available at* <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/odep/research-evaluation/statistics> (last access on Jan. 20, 2022).