

Employed Individuals with Disabilities Program

Testimony on SB867

Equal Love for Employees with Disabilities Act

Position: **FAVORABLE**

To Chair Kelley and the Senate Finance Committee:

My name is John Shatto, and I'm a resident of Frederick County and work in Montgomery and Anne Arundel Counties. I am a certified disability benefit counselor and also provide free benefit counseling to the public who are impacted by the Employed Individuals with Disabilities (EID) Program.

SB867 amends the requirements for EID eligibility under The Maryland Department of Health. Under the current eligibility criteria, enrollees face restrictive limits on earnings from wages, saving responsibly, and loving freely. Existing rules punish employed Marylanders with disabilities wishing to pursue marriage and force enrollees requiring Medicaid services to retire at age 65 years old.

I work with the disabled, low income and homeless. For these persons it is nearly impossible to get and keep Medicaid while working. Medicaid is often critical not only for general health concerns but also for medications that allow a person to continue work or move to full time work. Many of my clients want to work and attain the accomplishments available to most of us like renting a place to live, buying a car, and economic security.

The "Equal Love for Employees with Disabilities Act" bill allows employed Marylanders with Disabilities to have a quality and fulfilling work and family life. SB867 affords Employed Individuals with Disabilities, meaningful opportunities for competitive career advancements and marriage, without the fear of losing medical benefits.

In January 2022, New Jersey Governor Murphy signed S3455/A5262 into law nearly identical eligibility requirements within the NJ Workability Program.

I respectfully urge this committee to demonstrate its commitment to Employed Marylanders with Disabilities by **issuing a favorable report to SB867**.

Sincerely,

John F. Shatto

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