



SENATE BILL 867
Employed Individuals with Disabilities Program
March 8, 2022
POSITION: FAVORABLE

To Chair Kelley and the Senate Finance Committee:

Pathfinders for Autism (PFA) is Maryland's largest autism organization dedicated to helping individuals, parents, and professionals find resources, support, and training while working to increase the awareness of autism spectrum disorders. We accomplish this through a variety of programs and services, all of which are offered FREE of charge. Last year our programs directly served 20,000 Maryland residents.

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.

Like all Maryland residents, people with disabilities have the fundamental human right to determine what makes for a good life to them. They should enjoy the freedom to make decisions about where they work, when they retire, and if they chose to marry. The loss of disability benefits should not be a deciding factor in a person's pursuit of life goals. One's age and/or marital status does not change an individual's disability status. The marriage penalty has made it so that many people with disabilities cannot get married or start a family. Forced retirement prohibits individual choice to pursue a career to its fullest potential. These policies stem from longstanding institutionalized ableism that actively prevents people with disabilities from living long, fulfilling lives.

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.

I respectfully urge this committee to demonstrate its commitment to Employed Marylanders with Disabilities by issuing a favorable report to SB867. For more information, please contact Rebecca Rienzi, Executive Director, Pathfinders for Autism at 443-330-5370, ext. 101 or rrienzi@pfamd.org.