

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 Kim Allen, and I'm a resident of Montgomery County Maryland. I am a mature person with disabilities who is frustrated and intimidated by the current Employed Individuals with Disabilities (EID) Program guidelines.

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.

Changing the current eligibility guidelines would allow me to work without anxiety and without restrictions. I am blessed to be a mature woman with viable work skills. I am excited the Assembly is considering revising EID under SB867. Changing the unemployment grace period is very important as well as eliminating the income and resource limit. This would allow me to work without concern for my health insurance cost or income allowance restrictions. Lower the enrollment age to 16 will protect and encourage transitioning age youth workers to pursue employment opportunities. Lastly, it is vital to eliminate Medicaid barriers i.e., application/enrollment procedures and transitioning between programs. These must be adjusted to meet the needs of individuals excited and eager to work. It is fantastic to know the Legislature is continuing to remove restrictions and barriers in the employment process for Marylanders.

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,
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