



March 8, 2022

**Senate Finance Committee
TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT**

SB 867- Equal Love for Employees with Disabilities Act

Accessible Resources for Independence, The Freedom Center, The IMAGE Center, Independence Now, and Resources for Independence are disability resource and advocacy organizations run by and for people with disabilities. We are small, but mighty non-profits serving 12 counties in Maryland.

Accessible Resources for Independence, The Freedom Center, The IMAGE Center, Independence Now, and Resources for Independence are pleased to support SB 867- Equal Love for Employees with Disabilities Act. SB867 amends the requirements for the Employed Individual with Disabilities Medicaid Buy-In Program (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 65.

People with disabilities face barriers to full inclusion into the community. One of the barriers that we often see is that people are not able to have the tools and resources they need to engage with and maintain competitive employment. EID provides a much-needed resource to ensure that people with disabilities can work.

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 with nearly identical eligibility requirements within the NJ Workability Program.

We 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 Katie Collins-Ihrke, Executive Director at Accessible Resources for Independence, at 443-713-3914 or kihrke@arinow.org.