



## Maryland Developmental Disabilities Council

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House Ways and Means Committee

February 24, 2022

HB 660: Commission to Study the Division of Rehabilitative Services

**Position: Support with Amendments**

The Maryland Developmental Disabilities Council (DD Council) is a statewide public policy organization that creates change to make it possible for people with developmental disabilities to live the lives they want with the support they need. The DD Council is led by people with developmental disabilities and their families who establish priorities for our work. Our priorities include: 1) expanding opportunities for people with developmental disabilities to have jobs they want, in the community, alongside co-workers without disabilities, and 2) increasing support for community-based employment. To that end, we partner with people with disabilities, families, state agencies, policy makers, and others.

State vocational rehabilitation (VR) services programs, authorized by the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and amended by the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), provide services for people with disabilities to prepare for and engage in competitive integrated employment and achieve economic self-sufficiency. **The Division of Rehabilitation Services (DORS) is Maryland's VR program, and plays a critical role for people with disabilities who want to get or keep a job. Too many Marylanders with disabilities cannot access these services due to long wait lists and other barriers. A comprehensive review of DORS is needed, therefore we support HB 660.**

However, in order to ensure issues are thoroughly analyzed, and appropriate recommendations made, we recommend the following amendments that strengthen the Commission's purview:

- **Add the Maryland Department of Disabilities** as a required member of the Commission
- **Add that the Commission shall evaluate and make recommendations on "ways to enhance the capacity of DORS to serve more people, including a thorough review of the Workforce Technology Center, and ways to provide more inclusive work-based experiences."**

The goal of this Commission should be to ensure more people with disabilities get the services and supports they need, and those already receiving services get the breadth of support DORS offers to participate in the workforce. This includes building the capacity of DORS to provide efficient, effective services. To do this, DORS must be properly funded and positioned in state government in a way that maximizes its efficiency and effectiveness to provide services.

A primary example that the Commission should consider in its analysis is the Workforce Technology Center (WTC). WTC is a segregated center in Baltimore, and is not accessible to everyone. We know that there are more inclusive ways to deliver similar services and support. Exploring ways to reimagine the services provided at WTC could prove to be more cost effective, therefore it should be specifically added as an issue the Commission evaluates.

People with disabilities need access to the critical services provided by DORS, and the Commission's work and recommendations will help move Maryland forward to increase quality and access of the programs they offer.

For these reasons, the DD Council supports HB 660 with the amendments outlined above.

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