



February 21, 2022

The Honorable Vanessa Atterbury, Alonzo Washington, and members of the Ways and Means Committee
Room 131
House Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

**RE: Support for HB 660: Commission to Study the Division of Rehabilitative Service
(Student Job Training Reformation Act)**

Dear Delegates Atterbury and Washington:

I am writing today as the Executive Director of The Parents' Place of MD (www.ppmd.org) in support of HB 660. The Parents' Place of MD is the US Department of Education Office of Special Education Programs funded Parent Training Information Center for Maryland. PPMD serve families who have children and youth with disabilities and special healthcare needs with a mission to empower families as advocates and partners in improving education and health outcomes for children with disabilities and special healthcare needs with a commitment to diversity and equity.

Just last year PPMD supported and assisted over 12,000 families with their questions about their child's education and health. There is not a day that goes by that the team at PPMD is not answering questions about transition – services that start at age 14 for youth – for families. This is a complicated and challenging time for families and youth. Families are entering into the world of adult services and DORS (Division of Rehabilitative Services) is one such entity. There is no disagreement that DORS has incredibly long wait lists along with extreme staff shortages impacting their ability to serve youth and their families. This is one of the main reasons that PPMD supports HB660. By creating a study commission of stakeholders who are vested in supporting youth with disabilities this will enable solutions to be discovered and will ultimately benefit youth and their post school outcomes.

The one major concern with the legislation is the composition of the group membership. I am writing to formally request that The Parents' Place of MD be added to the study commission. PPMD, plays a vital role in informing, supporting, training, and empowering families about their rights and privileges in transition services, which includes services from DORS. We are the only entity in the state, for the last 30 years, who have served and trained thousands of families. PPMD has also provided hundreds of thousand pieces of factual, non-biased, evidenced based information which enables families to make the best decision for themselves and their young person. PPMD will also be the best organization to help locate parents to fill the seats on the commission. Given PPMD's expertise we formally request that we be added to the members.

Sincerely,

Rene Averitt-Sanzone
Executive Director