



HB 1226: Economic Development - Nonprofit Sustainability Fund - Establishment

Testimony of Maryland Centers for Independent Living

House: Appropriations, March 9, 2023

The seven Centers for Independent Living (CIL) in Maryland were established by federal law and work to ensure the civil rights and quality services of people with disabilities in Maryland. CILs are nonprofit disability resource and advocacy organizations located throughout Maryland operated by and for people with disabilities. CIL staff and Boards are at least 51% people with disabilities. We are part of a nationwide network which provides Information and Referral, Advocacy, Peer Support, Independent Living Skills training and Transition Services.

HB 1226 would establish the Nonprofit Sustainability Fund in the Maryland Department of Commerce. The Nonprofit Sustainability Fund would provide general operating support to nonprofit organizations in the State that meet certain criteria.

Nonprofit organizations in the state of Maryland serve Marylanders in need, improve health outcomes, enhance education, enrich the environment, and support arts and culture that we all enjoy as residents of the Free State. There is bipartisan agreement that nonprofits are part of the communities they serve and preferable to government agencies in understanding and meeting the needs of those communities.

An unrestricted grant of 1.5 percent to 10 percent of revenues would provide a boost that would multiply the effectiveness of Maryland's small and mid-sized nonprofits. Almost all of the funding that is now available to nonprofits is restricted to certain uses and purposes. It is difficult to cover the organizational costs of running a nonprofit business, and it is difficult to obtain funds for organizations that flexibly address multiple needs in our communities.

It is estimated that the average grant would be \$46,000. An annual \$46,000 grant to each CIL would provide additional resources to defray the costs of assistive technology, expand peer mentoring, enhance the independent living skills of student entering postsecondary education or the workforce, and provide funds for home modifications.

Sustainable small and midsized nonprofit organizations in every county in Maryland foster community vitality and resiliency, while representing the needs and interests of Maryland's diverse communities. Nonprofit organizations, in partnership with the State of Maryland, can ensure communities in Maryland are able to receive high-quality programs and services from local, trusted nonprofit organizations.

The seven CILs foster vitality and resilience in the disability community. In partnership with the State of Maryland, CILs can ensure that individuals with disabilities in Maryland are able to receive high-quality programs and services and enhance partnerships with State, local and other nonprofit resources.

HB 1226 is common-sense legislation that would ensure the sustained results that nonprofit organizations uniquely provide to the citizens of Maryland. HB 1226 could bolster Maryland's Nonprofit sector, increasing employment and investment. It would help government to deliver services and address needs in every program area. It would help make Maryland a more attractive place to live, work, and start or expand a business.

The Maryland Independent Living Network respectfully requests a favorable report on HB 1226.

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