



MARYLAND DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES COALITION

Dedicated to the rights and quality of life for people with developmental disabilities in Maryland

House Appropriations Committee

February 21, 2023

HB546: Education – Service Year Option Program - Establishment

Position: Support with Amendment



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The Maryland Developmental Disabilities Coalition (DD Coalition) is comprised of five statewide organizations that are committed to improving the opportunities and outcomes for Marylanders with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD). As such, the DD Coalition supports the Governor’s Service Year Option Program with an amendment to make sure all students with disabilities, including students with significant support needs, have the option to participate.

People with disabilities will benefit from this Program. It gives youth and young adults with and without disabilities the opportunity to provide services to organizations that support people with disabilities, and also gives youth and young adults with disabilities the opportunity to serve others. It is particularly important to focus on the skills and abilities of youth and young adults with disabilities.

➤ **Only 50.6% of Marylanders with disabilities participate in the workforce.**

That percentage decreases significantly for Marylanders with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

Students who exit high school at age 21 with a Certificate of High School Completion are often students with intellectual and developmental disabilities who transition to long-term services and supports through the Developmental Disabilities Administration (DDA). DDA funds services and supports to make sure people live the lives they want. This includes working and having meaningful days when not working. A service year could allow young adults who receive supports from the DDA explore, develop, and demonstrate skills that lead to employment.

To make sure those students are eligible for that opportunity, we strongly recommend the following amendments that makes clear all students can participate in the Program with the support they need to do so:

Page 3, lines 1-6:

(F) “PROGRAM PARTICIPANT” MEANS AND INDIVIDUAL WHO: (1) HAS RECEIVED A HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA, GED, OR COMPARABLE PROOF OF EQUIVALENT EDUCATIONAL LEVEL WITHIN 2 YEARS BEFORE APPLYING FOR A SERVICE PLACEMENT UNDER THE PROGRAM; **OR (2) HAS RECEIVED A MARYLAND HIGH SCHOOL CERTIFICATE OF COMPLETION.**

page 5, line 9:

(I) WORK AT LEAST 30 HOURS PER WEEK, **UNLESS OTHERWISE APPROVED BY THE DEPARTMENT.**

We appreciate the Governor's focus on the importance of service and intention to be inclusive of all students. We wholeheartedly believe the Service Year Option Program benefits people with developmental disabilities in multiple ways. In order to ensure equity and access for all, we support HB546 with the amendments outlined above.

Contact:

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