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March 15, 2023

Senate Bill 934

State Department of Education – Division of Rehabilitation Services-

Funding and Staffing

Senate Budget and Tax Committee

Position: SUPPORT

The Maryland Association of Community Services (MACS) is a non-profit association of over 120 agencies across Maryland serving people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD). MACS members provide residential, day and supported employment services to thousands of Marylanders, so that they can live, work and fully participate in their communities. The Division of Rehabilitative Services (DORS) is Maryland's vocational rehabilitation program and receives most of its funding from the federal government to assist people with disabilities to go to work, stay at a job, and prepare to go to work.

SB 934 requires the Governor to include a General Fund Appropriation for the required state match for the federal funds DORS receives. Under federal regulations, the federal share of funding for a state's public vocational rehabilitation program is 78.1%. The state must only fund the remaining 21.3% of the vocational program.

In addition, beginning in 2025, the bill requires the Governor to include funding in the budget in an amount sufficient to employ 74 staff members in DORS who will perform duties in DORS' Vocational Rehabilitation Program. In sum, this bill comprises two of the recommendations from the DORS workgroup that was created last year in Ch. 331 of 2022.

As an Employment First state, Maryland puts great effort into getting people with disabilities employed, and DORS plays a crucial role in this endeavor. This bill is critical to ensuring that the state receives its federal match from Congress and does not leave any funding on the table for these important vocational rehabilitation services. By securing this federal funding with a much lower percentage of state dollars in place and adding 74 more DORS staff, DORS can reduce its 2,777 person waitlist for employment services for people with disabilities, expand training opportunities offered to people with disabilities, and reduce the large caseloads carried by DORS counselors.

For all of these reasons, MACS urges a favorable report.

For further information please contact Laura Howell, Executive Director, at lhowell@macsonline.org.

