



DATE: March 15, 2023

BILL: Senate Bill 959: Higher Education - Maryland 529 Program - Reform

COMMITTEE: Senate Budget and Taxation Committee

POSITION: Favorable with Amendments

Dear Chair Guzzone:

The Maryland Department of Disabilities (MDOD) is pleased to support with amendments Senate Bill 959: Higher Education - Maryland 529 Program - Reform and respectfully request that the bill be amended to add "THE SECRETARY OF DISABILITIES, OR THE SECRETARY'S DESIGNEE" to the Financial Education and Capability Commission which replaces the Maryland 529 Board.

The Secretary of Disabilities was added to the Maryland 529 Board (Board) in concert with the addition of the Maryland ABLE Program six years ago. Maryland ABLE Program encourages and assists individuals and families in saving private funds to support individuals with disabilities to maintain health, independence, and quality of life and provides secure funding for disability-related expenses on behalf of designated beneficiaries with disabilities.

Under SB959, the Board is replaced by the State Treasurer, and 'shall work in consultation with the Department of Disabilities to develop, administer, manage, and promote the Maryland ABLE Program'. The amendment, as proposed, would ensure the continuation of MDOD in the same role for quality and continuity of the Maryland ABLE Program.

Highlights of MDOD's collaboration with the Maryland ABLE Program over the past six years include:

- MDOD chaired the initial workgroup that established the Maryland ABLE Program;
- MDOD Secretary chairing the ABLE Subcommittee;
- MDOD providing critical disability-specific knowledge to Board;
- MDOD providing access to essential disability stakeholder input;
- MDOD and Maryland ABLE co-hosting Listening Sessions; and
- MDOD and Maryland ABLE co-sponsoring Informational Sessions.

For those reasons, MDOD would request to continue in our role as an important advisor to the Maryland ABLE Program as a member of the Financial Education and Capability Commission or any other board or commission established to advise the Maryland ABLE Programs.

If you have any questions please contact Elizabeth Hall, Director of Interagency Affairs, (410)767-3652, [elizabeth.hall2@maryland.gov](mailto:elizabeth.hall2@maryland.gov).

Sincerely,

*Carol A. Beatty*

Carol A. Beatty, Secretary