



### **HB 323 Social Services Programs - SUPPORT**

Testimony of Maryland Centers for Independent Living

House Economic Matters Committee, February 16, 2023

The seven Centers for Independent Living (CIL) were established by federal law and work to ensure the civil rights and quality services of people with disabilities in Maryland. Centers for Independent Living 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.

The staff of Centers for Independent Living support hundreds of people with disabilities around the state to apply for Energy And Utility Assistance, SNAP and Medicaid, it would increase the efficiency greatly if individuals could be automatically enrolled in Energy Assistance if they meet the financial eligibility requirements. The individuals we support are often dissuaded from applying for public assistance because of the amount of paperwork and documentation needed. To be able to reduce that would increase the number of individuals accessing Energy Assistance which is so desperately needed.

This legislation will benefit individuals with disabilities greatly in accessing Energy and Utility Assistance in a far more streamlined way.

We support HB323.

#### **Contact Information:**

Sarah Basehart  
Independence Now  
240-898-2183  
[sbasehart@innow.org](mailto:sbasehart@innow.org)

Hindley Williams  
The IMAGE Center  
410-305-9199  
[hwilliams@imagemd.org](mailto:hwilliams@imagemd.org)