



LETTER OF SUPPORT

Senate Bill 608 and House Bill 53

The undersigned organizations express our support for Senate Bill 608 and House Bill 53 which establish the Maryland Statewide Independent Living Council as a part of Maryland government.

The Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC) along with the Centers for Independent Living were established by federal law¹ and work together to comprise the Maryland Independent Living Network. The Network works to ensure the civil rights and quality services of people with disabilities in Maryland. The Network develops a State Plan to support the participation of persons with disabilities in their communities. The SILC monitors and evaluates the provision of services under the Plan, holds public hearings, and provides reports and resources to the community.

The Network embraces the “independent living philosophy” which includes consumer control, peer support, self-determination, and advocacy for people with disabilities to promote independence, inclusion, non-discrimination, and dignity for all people with disabilities.

SILC members are persons with disabilities and advocates or family members of persons with disabilities. State agency representatives participate as non-voting members. Members are appointed by the Governor as set forth in federal law. SILC staff are hired by the SILC. Federal law requires the SILC not be established within a State agency. All states and territories have SILCs and CILs. Many SILCs are created as independent organizations and many operate as non-profit organizations.²

CILs are non-profit agencies operated by and for people with disabilities. Seven CILs serve jurisdictions throughout Maryland and offer core services of Information and Referral; Advocacy; Peer Support; Independent Living Skills training, and Transition. Other services include: COVID 19 outreach and vaccination help; home accessibility modifications, assistive technology to support independence, providing skills training for employment, peer support, assistance to youth transitioning from high school and to people in nursing facilities moving back to their communities. **WHY** HB53 and SB608 provides statutory authorization for the SILC to promote its stability, independence and ability to incorporate and achieve its goals. The legislation conforms the SILC to federal law.

¹ In 1992, Section 705 of the Federal Rehabilitation Act authorized the creation of the Statewide Independent Living Council.

² SILCs organized as independent organizations and non-profits include those in the states of AK, AL, HI, IN, KS, ME, NC, NY, OH, PA, SC, TX, WI. This list is not all inclusive.

We the undersigned strongly support this legislation.

The League For People with Disabilities

The ARC Maryland

The Maryland Developmental Disabilities Council

Shared Support Maryland, Inc.

Patient Providers, LLC

Disability Rights Maryland

Public Justice Center

National Federation of the Blind of Maryland

Homeless Persons Representation Project

Maryland Office of the Public Defender

Maryland Centers for Independent Living