

**Maryland House of Delegates  
Health and Government Operations Committee**

**Testimony of Lisa Wiederlight  
March 14, 2023**

**In Support of: HB 870 Division of Rehabilitation Services and Developmental Disabilities  
Administration - Memorandum of Understanding**

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of HB 870 today. My 22 year-old son has autism and epilepsy, among other conditions, and as a result of a lack of preparation, coordination, and collaboration, he was unable to access job training and exploration services through DORS when he was in high school. Specifically, the individual at DORS with whom we were working was ready to provide my son an internship at Sinai Hospital doing filing. However, when I mentioned that my son requires one-on-one supervision given his epilepsy, she said she would get back to me, and never did. I followed up and heard nothing. I chose to not engage with DORS after this and another disconcerting experience with DORS.

These service gaps must be closed, especially since recent studies found that people with autism have on average four co-occurring conditions. Additionally, studies have found that the majority of people with autism have gastrointestinal disease, up to 1/3 of people with autism have epilepsy, and people on the autism spectrum have a higher rate of depression and anxiety disorders than their peers who are not on the spectrum.

It is obviously very important that DORS and DDA coordinate and share information securely and appropriately so that both agencies can provide services that help people with disabilities, who already have lower employment rates than non-disabled peers, achieve all that they can. The December 2022 *Interim Report* from the Commission to Study DORS specifically recommended a memorandum of understanding with DDA that will enable DORS to access the necessary medical, psychological, or school documentation of DDA applicants who are seeking DORS services to expedite the eligibility process by DORS. I respectfully ask that you support this bill without reservation.