

SUPPORT – HB 657

Maryland Medical Assistance Program - Employed Individuals with Disabilities
Health and Government Operations Committee
February 28, 2023

Chair Peña-Melnyk and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony in support of House Bill 657, on behalf of Disability Rights Maryland (DRM). DRM is a legal nonprofit and Maryland's federally designated Protection & Advocacy agency. DRM is dedicated to increasing opportunities for Marylanders with disabilities to be integrated in their communities, live independently, and access high-quality, affordable health care.

People with disabilities face various barriers to full inclusion in their community, including the lack of resources to effectively maintain competitive employment. Medicaid is an important source of coverage for services that support the ability of people with disabilities to work, such as personal assistant services, prescription drugs, and assistive technology.

The Employed Individuals with Disabilities program (EID) provides medically necessary services and supports to ensure people with disabilities can work. In removing the income limits for EID participants and only applying the asset limit at the time of initial application, HB 657 enables people with disabilities to retain access to these services while also accepting pay raises as they advance in their careers and accrue savings for retirement. HB 657 also allows EID participants who become unemployed, through no fault of their own, to maintain their Medicaid coverage for up to one year.

How Maryland administers its Medicaid program must incorporate our values as an Employment First state. Employment First means employment in the general workforce should be the first and preferred option for individuals with disabilities receiving assistance from publicly funded systems. Simply put, Employment First means real jobs, real wages.

Several states have already removed income and/or asset limits under their buy-in Medicaid programs for working people with disabilities, while others have significantly raised their limits.¹ In January 2022, New Jersey's Governor Murphy signed S3455/A5262 into law with nearly identical eligibility requirements within the NJ Workability Program.²

DRM urges the Committee to support the ability of working Marylanders with disabilities to access and maintain Medicaid coverage, and issue a favorable report on HB 657. Thank you for your consideration.

Please contact Randi Ames at 443-692-2506 or RandiA@DisabilityRightsMd.org with any questions.

¹ <https://www.kff.org/report-section/medicaid-financial-eligibility-in-pathways-based-on-old-age-or-disability-in-2022-findings-from-a-50-state-survey-issue-brief/>

² <https://www.njleg.state.nj.us/bill-search/2020/S3455>