



Maryland Developmental Disabilities Council

CREATING CHANGE • IMPROVING LIVES

House Health and Government Operations Committee
HB 504: Maryland Developmental Disabilities Council – Establishment

February 28, 2023

Position: Support

The Maryland Developmental Disabilities Council (Council) is an independent, public policy organization that creates change to make it possible for people with developmental disabilities to live the lives they want with the support they need. Our vision is that people with and without disabilities in Maryland live, learn, work, and play together. We have been creating change to make that possible and improve the lives of people with developmental disabilities since 1971. **Federal law – the Developmental Disabilities Assistance and Bill of Rights Act (DD Act) – guides our work, and all of our funding comes from the federal government.** The Council is located within state government, but we are independent. People with developmental disabilities and family members of people with developmental disabilities lead our work.

WHAT does this legislation do?

- **Establishes the Maryland Developmental Disabilities Council as an independent unit of state government.** Currently, the Council is a program of the Maryland Department of Disabilities.
- **Updates an outdated Executive Order and codifies our authority in state law.** The DD Act outlines our authority and actions we can take to address the needs of people with developmental disabilities by conducting advocacy, systems change, and capacity building efforts.
- **Outlines other requirements that mirror the federal law.** The DD Act requires us to develop a plan every 5 years that guides our work (5-year State Plan). It also requires the Governor appoint the members outlined in SB 168.
- **Codifies that a state entity may not interfere with the Council’s work, budget, personnel, or state plan development or implementation.** This is a requirement of the DD Act and allows the Council to continue our advocacy, capacity building, and systems change efforts.

WHY is this legislation important?

- There is a Developmental Disabilities Council (DD Council) in every state and US territory. Each one exists because of federal law and federal funds. The 56 DD Councils work to address identified needs through “advocacy, system change, and capacity building efforts that promote self-determination, integration, and inclusion.”ⁱ
- The Maryland DD Council serves as the official agency responsible for planning and implementing the use of the federal funds allotted to Maryland under the DD Act. In 1971, the governor formally established us as the official agency by executive order. That executive order

was updated in 1987 to comply with the DD Act and move us into the “Governor’s Office of Individuals with Disabilities” – now the Maryland Department of Disabilities, but has not be updated since.

- It updates language, aligns with federal law to be current and consistent, moves us out of the Department of Disabilities, and codifies current operations.

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ⁱ Developmental Disabilities Assistance and Bill of Rights Act of 2000. https://acl.gov/sites/default/files/about-acl/2016-12/dd_act_2000.pdf.