

HOUSE HEALTH AND GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS COMMITTEE
HB 870: Division of Rehabilitation Services and Developmental Disabilities
Administration - Memorandum of Understanding
March 14, 2023
Position: Support with Amendment

Disability Rights Maryland (DRM) is the protection and advocacy organization for the state of Maryland; the mission of the organization, part of a national network of similar agencies, is to advocate for the legal rights of people with disabilities throughout the state. DRM's work encompasses individual cases and systemic advocacy. DRM has a long history of representing students with disabilities in special education matters, including older students who are preparing to transition out of the school system. DRM is also responsible for advocating on behalf of beneficiaries of social security payments who face barriers to employment.

For the past six months, DRM has served in its P&A capacity on the Commission to Study the Division of Rehabilitative Services (the Commission). One of the Commission's responsibilities was to consider methods for improving the relationship and communication between transition professionals at the Division of Rehabilitation Services (DORS) and the Developmental Disabilities Administration (DDA). In its interim report, the Commission recommended DORS enter a memorandum of understanding with DDA to "enable DORS to access the necessary medical, psychological, and school documentation of DDA applicants seeking DORS services." DRM supported this recommendation and agrees that access to medical, psychological, and school documentation will support DORS in better serving consumers.

To this end, the Commission also recommended a deep dive be conducted into the DORS and DDA documentation requirements to streamline the necessary supporting documentation of services. As Commission-member, Parents' Place of Maryland noted in their comments before the last Commission meeting, there is a need for a formalized data-sharing and partnership process that ensures the timely flow of information between DORS, DDA, and Community Rehabilitation Providers.

Finally, DRM would note that many Commission members felt there was not enough time to thoroughly study and discuss the questions posed to the Commission. The Commission provided much needed transparency and allowed for preliminary study and discourse, but further review is still needed. DRM believes an extension of the Commission's work is necessary in order to further evaluate and make recommendations on improving the Division of Rehabilitation Services' programs and services. **Accordingly, DRM would support an amendment to HB 870 to continue the Commission to Study the Division of Rehabilitation Services.**

Additionally, while the Commission was initially made up of members with knowledge of the needs of transitioning youth, the Division's programs and services span a much larger population. In order to best continue this important work, DRM would propose the addition of individuals with knowledge about employment and services for Marylanders over the age of 21. Although

the Superintendent of Schools was given the authority to add “other members considered necessary,” several Commission members were vocal about the need for additional Commission members with experience with the adult employment services in Maryland and the superintendent did not exercise the authority to add necessary members. If the Commission is to continue its meaningful work, DRM believes the Commission members should be able to vote to add necessary members.

For these reasons, DRM supports House Bill 870 with amendment.

Please reach out to Megan Jones at meganj@disabilityrightsmd.org 443-228-8655 with any questions.

Respectfully submitted,

Megan Jones