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February 22, 2023

Health and Government Operations Committee House Bill 454- Health Occupations - Licenses, Certificates, and Registrations – Immigrants

Position: Support

The Maryland Association of Community Services (MACS) is a non-profit association of over 120 agencies across Maryland serving people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD). MACS members provide residential, day and supported employment services to thousands of Marylanders, so that they can live, work and fully participate in their communities.

People with disabilities rely on Direct Support Professionals (DSPs) to provide the supports they need to be part of their communities. Currently, IDD providers are in a workforce crisis. They cannot attract enough DSPs to work for them on the frontlines and provide supports to people with disabilities. Generally speaking, the DSP profession is an entry point job opportunity for many people, as there is no college degree required. The profession has many new immigrants to the country who are anxious to work, and will receive on the job training, but they need to be certified by the Board of Nursing to be a Certified Medication Technician (CMT), so they can give medications out to people who are not able to take medications by themselves.

The Board of Nursing requires that anyone applying to be a CMT have a Social Security Number. Senate Bill 187, which allows DSPs to present Social Security Numbers or Individual Taxpayer Numbers to the Board of Nursing would open up the pool of candidates for DSP jobs. There are many people in our state who are eligible to work and could work as DSPs but who don't yet have a Social Security Number, so they cannot become a CMT, which means they generally won't be hired as a DSP.

Unfortunately, this means that at a time of workforce crisis, there is a section of the population that is being excluded from the DSP pool of applicants because they don't have a Social Security Number. Senate Bill 187 would add to the pool of people who could become DSPs by allowing them to use their Taxpayer Identification Number to become a CMT, and then be able to be hired to work as a DSP. The DSP workforce crisis is dire, and anything that can be done to widen the pool of qualified applicants for these jobs, like Senate Bill 187, should be done. MACS urges a favorable report on SB 187.

For further information please contact Tracey Paliath, Director of Government Relation, at tpaliath@macsonline.org.

