



**Maryland Developmental
Disabilities Council**



House Health and Government Operations Committee
HB 726: Maryland Medical Assistance Program – Autism Waiver – Military Families
February 28, 2023
Position: Support

The Maryland Developmental Disabilities Council (DD Council) and The Arc Maryland work to advance the opportunities of people with developmental disabilities, and create change to make it possible for people to live the lives they want with the support they need. This includes children on the autism spectrum and their families.

The Autism Wavier Program began in 2001 and the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) administers the program. The Waiver provides families access to Medicaid, in addition to service coordination, respite care, in-home supports, behavioral supports, parent training, home modifications, and other services, based upon the child’s need. The Autism Waiver program now supports 1,500 children and their families, however,

- **Approximately 6,300 children are on the registry waiting for services.**
- **Almost 14,000 students in Maryland have an autism spectrum disorder.ⁱ**
- **Even though research clearly shows the benefits of early intervention, children may spend years on the registry waiting to receive services. Many children may age out before they ever receive services.**

According to MSDE, a child on the Autism Registry waits an average of 9 years to receive critical services. While efforts in the last few years led to more funding and more children and their families receiving services, and better processes to review the Autism Waiver registry, including removal of anyone from the registry, timelines, and other procedures to find families, it remains difficult and cumbersome given the length of time families wait. This is particularly true for Maryland’s military families.

- **There are nearly 50,000 active duty and reserve members of the military in Maryland.ⁱⁱ**
- **Those active duty and reserve members of the military have over 46,500 children.ⁱⁱⁱ**

In recognition of this, Maryland already requires other Waiver programs, like those operated by the Developmental Disabilities Administration (DDA), to allow dependents of military families to remain on the waiting list for services while the family is out of the state for military service. The law also requires the DDA reinstate services to an eligible person once that family returns to Maryland. (Md. Code Ann. Health-General §7-404.1).

HB 726 does the same thing for children of military families. If Maryland provides this assurance to families, not only will more children with autism get the services and supports they need, we can relieve one more stressor for Maryland’s active duty members of the military. Therefore, the DD Council and The Arc Maryland support HB 726.

Contact: Rachel London, Executive Director, DD Council: RLondon@md-council.org

ⁱ MSDE, Division of Early Intervention and Special Education Services Census Data, October 1, 2020.

ⁱⁱ Data current as of September 2021. DoD Defense Manpower Data Center. <<http://www.governing.com/gov-data/public-workforce-salaries/military-civilian-active-duty-employee-workforce-numbers-by-state.html>>

ⁱⁱⁱ December 2021, Military State Policy Source. <<https://statepolicy.militaryonesource.mil/state/MD>>