



**HOUSE BILL 870: Division of Rehabilitation Services &
Developmental Disabilities Administration – MOU
March 14, 2023
POSITION: Support**

Pathfinders for Autism (PFA) is Maryland's largest autism organization dedicated to helping individuals, parents, and professionals find resources, support, and training while working to increase the awareness of autism spectrum disorders. We accomplish this through a variety of programs and services, all of which are offered FREE of charge. Last year our programs directly served 17,400 Maryland residents.

1:49 Maryland children are diagnosed with Autism (CDC 2021 Autism and Developmental Disability Monitoring Report). There are 13,983 students in Maryland Public schools diagnosed with autism (MSDE Special Education Services Censuses data 2021-2022). The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimate that over 2% of adults in the US have autism spectrum disorder.

National studies estimate 50-75% of the over 5 million autistic adults in the U.S. are unemployed or underemployed. Nearly 50% of 25-year-olds with autism have never held a paying job, despite having the skill sets and expertise to excel in the workplace. These staggering statistics are the direct result of our nation's school systems and vocational programs ineffectiveness in preparing individuals with disabilities for the workplace. Maryland is no exception.

The Division of Rehabilitation Services (DORS) is Maryland's vocational rehabilitation program and receives most of its funding from a grant from the US Department of Education to provide support for people with disabilities to go to work, stay at a job, and prepare for the world of work. According to the DORS website (as of February 20, 2023) 7,396 adults (25 and older) and 5,589 youth (ages 14-24) currently receive employment services from DORS. There are 2,777 people waiting for these employment services. The requirements of HB870 are in direct support of the DORS Commission (created by HB660 in 2022), which focuses on improving the effectiveness and efficiency of DORS services and supports.

HB870 Requires the Developmental Disabilities Administration (DDA) to enter into a MOU with DORS to share data for medical and psychological records of people both agencies support. Data sharing is one method to expedite the eligibility process for DORS programs and services for which people wait a long time to receive. Streamlining the process will improve the amount of time it takes to provide critical services. Improved communication and data sharing between DORS and DDA will help ensure each agencies accountability.

For more information, please contact Rebecca Rienzi, Executive Director, Pathfinders for Autism at 443-330-5370, ext. 101 or rrienzi@pfamd.org