

ANNE R. KAISER
Legislative District 14
Montgomery County

Health and Government
Operations Committee

House Chair
Joint Committee on Cybersecurity,
Information Technology and
Biotechnology



The Maryland House of Delegates
6 Bladen Street, Room 425
Annapolis, Maryland 21401
301-858-3036 · 410-841-3036
800-492-7122 Ext. 3036
Fax 301-858-3060 · 410-841-3060
Anne.Kaiser@house.state.md.us

THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

**Testimony in Support of
House Bill 504: Maryland Developmental Disabilities Council - Establishment
February 28th, 2023**

Madam Chair Peña-Melnyk and esteemed members of the Health and Government Operations Committee, it is my pleasure to come before you and offer testimony in favor of **House Bill 504: Maryland Developmental Disabilities Council - Establishment**. This bill would codify the existing Maryland Developmental Disabilities Council as an independent unit of state government, allowing it to be an even stronger and more effective policy and advocacy entity that works for the approximately 108,000 Marylanders who have developmental disabilities and their families.

History. The federal Developmental Disabilities Assistance and Bill of Rights Act (DD Act) established Developmental Disabilities Councils (DD Councils) to address the needs of people with developmental disabilities by conducting advocacy and carrying out capacity building efforts. Pursuant to the DD Act, in 1971, the Governor issued an executive order to create the Maryland State Planning Council on Developmental Disabilities – now known as the Maryland Developmental Disabilities Council. That Executive Order was later revised to place the Council within the Governor’s Office for Individuals with Disabilities – now called the Maryland Department of Disabilities (MDOD).

Bill purpose. Although the DD Act was updated in 2000, the Executive Order has not been updated since 1987 and has fallen out of compliance with federal law. This is a problem because the DD Council is 100% federally funded and must comply with the DD Act. Additionally, moving the Council from under the structure of MDOD will streamline its work. While MDOD and the Council have a close and productive working relationship, both entities agree that this restructuring is needed. Otherwise, there can be misunderstandings because the Council is completely independent and does not operate under the direction of the Governor or MDOD.

Of the 56 DD Councils across the U.S. states and territories, 33 are formally codified in state statute. This bill aligns Maryland with federal law and adds Maryland to the growing list of states that have formally codified their Council.

I urge a favorable report on **House Bill 504**. Thank you.