



MARYLAND
CATHOLIC
CONFERENCE

February 28, 2023

HB 504

Maryland Developmental Disabilities Council – Establishment

House Health and Government Operations Committee

Position: Favorable

The Catholic Conference is the public policy representative of the three (arch)dioceses serving Maryland, which together encompass over one million Marylanders. Statewide, their parishes, schools, hospitals, and numerous charities combine to form our state's second largest social service provider network, behind only our state government.

House Bill 504 establishes the Maryland Developmental Disabilities Council as an independent unit of State government with the authority to conduct and support advocacy, systems change, and capacity-building efforts to promote inclusive communities and equity in services for individuals with disabilities in the State.

House Bill 504, will, among other things, provide authority to the Council to (a) develop and implement a 5 year strategic plan; (b) monitor, review, and annually evaluate the implementation of the State Plan; (c) review any plan in the State that relates to programs affecting individuals with Developmental Disabilities; (d) serve as an advocate for individuals with developmental disabilities; (e) conduct or support programs, projects, and activities that carry out the purpose of the act; (f) advise the Governor, State Legislature, and other pertinent agencies and organizations on policies, programs, and issues related to the needs of individuals with developmental disabilities and their families; and (g) review and make findings and recommendations regarding programs related to the support and services provided to individuals with developmental disabilities and their families.

Recent estimates in the United States show that about one in six, or about 17%, of children aged 3 through 17 years have one or more developmental disabilities.¹ The establishment of a Council to research and support programming, services, and policy will provide helpful

¹ <https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/developmentaldisabilities/about.html>

advocacy for those with developmental disabilities. The Conference fully supports policies that help people obtain the best quality of life possible. Because this bill aims to help people with developmental disabilities obtain a better quality of life, the Conference urges a favorable report on House Bill 504.