



Maryland Developmental Disabilities Council

CREATING CHANGE • IMPROVING LIVES

Health and Government Operations Committee

March 28, 2023

SB 732: Department of Disabilities – State Coordinator for Autism Strategy and Maryland Commission on Disabilities - Alterations

Position: Support

The Maryland Developmental Disabilities Council (Council) is an independent, public policy organization that creates changes to make it possible for people with developmental disabilities to live the lives they want with the support they need.

The Council partners with the Department of Disabilities (Department) on many important issues that improve the lives of people with disabilities. For example, because of our work with the Department during the COVID response and recovery, Marylanders with intellectual and developmental disabilities, and the people who support them, were prioritized for testing and vaccination. We also work together as members of the Advisory Stakeholder Group on Autism-Related Needs.

In fact, the Council chairs one of the 5 subcommittees of the Advisory Stakeholder Group, and continues to provide ongoing guidance to the Advisory Stakeholder Group as we develop the strategic plan.

WHAT does this legislation do?

- Adds a person with a traumatic brain injury to the Commission on Disabilities
- Moves the State Coordinator for Autism Strategy to the Department and requires the Department to provide staff for the Advisory Stakeholder Group on Autism-Related Needs

WHY is this legislation important?

- **Moving the State Coordinator for Autism Strategy makes sense.** To respond to the many barriers faced by people with disabilities, the Department of Disabilities is charged with “coordinating and improving the delivery of services to individuals with disabilities in the state of Maryland.” Towards this end, MDOD produces a [statewide disabilities plan](#) every 4 years, in consultation with the [Maryland Commission on Disabilities](#), to identify barriers to housing, employment, healthcare, transitioning youth, community living, transportation, etc., for all Marylanders with disabilities.
- **Increasing accountability and oversight is critical.** While the Advisory Stakeholder Group meets quarterly, the subcommittees do much of the work. The State Coordinator’s role, in consultation with the Advisory Stakeholder Group, is to identify and evaluate existing services, develop a strategic plan to address autism-related needs, and monitor and evaluate the implementation of the strategic plan.

All people with disabilities in Maryland deserve to receive the supports they need to live, learn, work, and play alongside Marylanders without disabilities. The State Coordinator for Autism Strategy and the Advisory Stakeholder Group can and should help to make that happen for Marylanders with autism spectrum disorder. **The move to the Department, with increased accountability, makes that more likely to happen. To ensure it does, the funding for staff support required by Human Services §7-111(e)(2) also needs to move to the Department.**

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