



Maryland Developmental
Disabilities Council
CREATING CHANGE • IMPROVING LIVES



Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee
HB 1176: Voluntary 9-1-1 Registry for Individuals Needing Special Assistance
March 30, 2023
Position: Support

The Arc Maryland, Maryland Developmental Disabilities Council (Council), and MACS are statewide organizations that work to protect and advance the rights and quality of life of people with disabilities. The Arc Maryland, MACS, and the Council were members of a workgroup that met several times over the summer to discuss ways to improve encounters between first responders and people with intellectual and developmental disabilities in Maryland. The group membership consisted of professional disability advocates, parents, people with disabilities, and first responders. The creation of a statewide voluntary 911 registry was one of the solutions the group explored in-depth.

This bill would establish a Voluntary 9–1–1 Registry Program to alert first responders of certain behaviors, diagnoses, or traits a person may present during encounters with first responders. Adults, parents or guardians of minor children, or legal guardians of adults (not including public guardians) can register for this program and provide information that helps first responders. This includes but is not limited to people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD). **This registry is completely voluntary, and the information provided for the registry is safeguarded within the Computer Aided Dispatch (CAD) system.** Howard County currently has a Voluntary 9-1-1 registry program that has operated successfully for several years. The positive outcomes of this program cannot be understated. People who have wandered from their homes have been quickly located and identified. People who do not use words, or whose movements due to their disability may have otherwise been misunderstood, have been supported with compassion according to local parent reports.

One individual with IDD and diabetes, told us of how he put his health information into the Howard County registry. When first responders recently responded to a call for assistance, they saw his self-provided information in the CAD system. Upon arrival, the individual was unconscious from a diabetic emergency, and first responders were able to use the information they had to quickly determine what might be happening to him. It was a comfort to him and his family that he had the opportunity to provide first responders information about himself before the emergency occurred.

Important components of the 911 Registry Program:

- It is voluntary. People can choose to use it or choose not to use it.
- Only adults, including people with IDD, their parents (if they are minor children), or their legal guardians (not including public guardians) can enter information about the person into the voluntary registry.
- A person, their parents (if the person is a minor), or their legal guardians can REMOVE the person from the voluntary registry at any time.
- The bill includes a requirement for data collection so use of the program can be measured.
- A person's name and information gets removed from the registry if someone does not reregister annually. This is important so the registry information stays current.

- The registry does not replace the need for continued police training on interactions with people who have disabilities. The intent is only to be another tool for people with disabilities and others who need assistance, and first responders.

For more information, please contact:

Ande Kolp, Executive Director, The Arc Maryland akolp@thearcmd.org

Rachel London, Executive Director, Maryland Developmental Disabilities Council, rachel@md-council.org

Laura Howell, Executive Director, Maryland Association of Community Services, lhowell@macsonline.org