



## Maryland Developmental Disabilities Council

CREATING CHANGE • IMPROVING LIVES

### Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee

March 30, 2023

### HB 1176: Public Safety – Voluntary 9-1-1 Registry

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 was a member 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. The group 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 because **it provides people who need assistance, including people with disabilities, AND first responders another tool to use.** It does not solve every problem, but it is a start.

**WHAT does this legislation do?** After further discussions with fellow advocates, the Maryland Association of Counties, and others, the Sponsor submitted amendments. As amended, HB 1176:

- Establishes 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 guardians of adults can register for this program and provide information that helps first responders. This includes people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD). **It is voluntary. People can choose to use it or choose not to use it.**
- Requires each person to register annually, and requires a person is removed if they do not update or validate the information.
- Clarifies that “noncompliance with information in the registry is not admission in any suit.”

#### WHY is this legislation important?

- **It creates consistency across counties.** 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 seemed inappropriate, have been supported with compassion according to local parent reports.
- **It is low cost.** The fiscal note references a similar bill last year, and counties reported, “Such a system could be implemented with little or no additional cost.” In fact, the Howard County program started and continued with existing staff and resources.
- **It is an important tool for Marylanders who need assistance and first responders.** The Voluntary 9-1-1 Registry is designed to supplement existing resources. It does not replace the need for continued training for police and first responders. In fact, training about people with IDD is already required for police.

All Marylanders deserve options to increase their ability to live the lives they want with the support they need. This Voluntary 9-1-1 Registry is another strategy to make that a reality by giving people who need extra support and assistance and first responders a way to share that information and plan.

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