



DATE: March 8, 2023 **COMMITTEE:** House Ways and Means
BILL NO: House Bill 1222
BILL TITLE: State Department of Education - Division of Rehabilitation Services - Funding and Staffing
POSITION: Support

Kennedy Krieger Institute supports Houser Bill 1222 - State Department of Education - Division of Rehabilitation Services - Funding and Staffing.

Bill Summary:

House Bill 1222 mandates funding, beginning in fiscal year 2025, to the Division of Rehabilitation Services. This funding will employ 74 staff members in the Division.

Background:

Kennedy Krieger's Neurodiversity at Work program takes a multi-faceted approach to hiring and retaining individuals of all abilities as part of the workforce. The Neurodiversity at Work program fosters integrated workplace settings where all individuals can experience success and independence. Currently the program includes several specialty initiatives Project SEARCH, CORE Foundations a Developmental Disabilities Administration licensed agency, HR pathways hiring program, training and education services, legislative efforts, research, transition consultation services, and planning for a national conference and on-going events.

CORE Foundations at Kennedy Krieger Institute is a Community Rehabilitation Partner through the Division of Rehabilitation Services (DORS) and provides short-term employment services for individuals with disabilities including but not limited to, job development preparation, job development, and job coaching.

Rationale:

The Division of Rehabilitation Services (DORS) has crucial services for individuals with disabilities. These programs are the building blocks for a successful transition from school to meaningful employment and increasing independence. If utilized to maximum capacity, the range of services available can support students from as early as age 14 years through adulthood. Accessing services through DORS can be challenging for many individuals with disabilities and has become significantly more challenging due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

In 2022, DORS provided services to 6,815 youth with significant disabilities (DORS annual report, 2022). This number represents a relatively small fraction of the individuals in Maryland living with disabilities. According to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention's Disability and Health Data System there were 911,437 Marylanders living with a disability in 2020. According to the *Study of the Individualized Education Program (IEP) Process and the Adequate Funding Level for Students with Disabilities* completed by WestEd during the 2017-2018 school year there were 97,233 students with individualized education plans in the Maryland School Systems.

Increasing staff at DORS, as outlined in the legislation, will reduce the waitlist, reduce the caseloads, and expand training and services in community-based settings. This is critical in ensuring that more individuals can access important transition services that will lead them to meaningful employment.

Kennedy Krieger Institute requests a favorable report on House Bill 1222.

Sources

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center on Birth Defects and Developmental Disabilities, Division of Human Development and Disability. Disability and Health Data System (DHDS) Data [online]. [accessed March 3 2023] URL: <https://dhds.cdc.gov>

Jason Willis, Sara Menlove Doutre, & Alex Berg Jacobson (2019). Study of the Individualized Education Program (IEP) Process and the Adequate Funding Level for Students with Disabilities. West Ed. [accessed Fe 20,2022]URL:<https://marylandpublicschools.org/Documents/IEPStudy/MDSpecialEdIEPAdequacyStudyConsolidatedReportFinal122019.pdf>.

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