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House Appropriations Committee
**SB859: State Department of Education – Division of
Rehabilitation Services – Funding**

March 20, 2024

POSITION: SUPPORT

The Arc Maryland is the largest statewide advocacy organization dedicated to protecting and advancing the rights of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Many people supported by The Arc have utilized services from the Division of Rehabilitation Services (DORS) for employment support, training, and career exploration. Over the past few years, DORS has had a loss of PINS due to budget constraints, and this has caused delays in access to vital services for people with disabilities.

During the 2022 legislative session, House Bill 660–Commission to Study the Division of Rehabilitation Services (DORS) was passed to establish a Commission to Study the Division of Rehabilitation Services (Chapter 331– Education Article of the Annotated Code of Maryland). The Commission was tasked with evaluating DORS and making recommendations on improving various aspects of DORS programs and services. The commission concluded its work in March 2023 and issued a final report, detailing several findings and recommendations to improve DORS services in Maryland.

This bill follows up on one of the Commission's main recommendations in the final reportⁱ – **that the Maryland General Assembly should statutorily ensure that the State adequately provides general funds, for DORS services, to meet the 21.3% federal funding match requirement. Without a committed appropriation for DORS funding, our state would be leaving millions of dollars on the table that could go toward additional DORS counselors and staff, and enhance timeliness and quality of critical employment services.**

The Vocational Rehabilitation program is considered a federal–state partnership program: funding for the services comes from two sources, the U.S. Department of Education Rehabilitation Services Administration and the State of Maryland. The State is responsible for providing non–federal funding to meet the Match requirements that are set out in the Act. **The federal government will provide 78.7% of the total funding and the State is required to provide the remaining 21.3%, in order to receive the total allotment of federal grant funding each year.**

While this bill does not require the appropriation, it strongly suggests that our state funding for DORS should be sufficient to meet the threshold for receiving federal funding. The loss of federal funds would have a significant impact on DORS' ability to provide services and training for individuals. For these reasons, we encourage the committee to return a favorable vote on SB859.

For more information, please contact Ande Kolp, Executive Director, akolp@thearcmd.org

ⁱ https://www.marylandpublicschools.org/programs/Documents/Gov-Rel/DORS_Commission_Final_A.pdf