



## Maryland Developmental Disabilities Council

CREATING CHANGE • IMPROVING LIVES

### Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

### SB 967: Higher Education – Part-Time Senatorial and Delegate Scholarships – Alterations

February 28, 2024

Position: Support

The Maryland Developmental Disabilities Council (Council) creates change to make it possible for people with developmental disabilities to live the lives they want with the support they need. The Council is led by a diverse group of people with developmental disabilities and family members of people with developmental disabilities who all agree that access to higher education is something people with disabilities need and want. For that reason, we support SB 967.

In fact, to support that, in FY 2020, the Council helped fund the Center for Transition and Career Innovation at University of Maryland to create a statewide Hub for Postsecondary Opportunities (Hub). The Hub continues to provide technical assistance to colleges and university statewide about access to higher education for people with developmental disabilities. In FY 2021, the Council helped establish the inclusive higher education program for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities at the University of Maryland – College Park. TerpsEXCEED is a model inclusive higher education program that does not require a high school diploma to attend. The program includes academic and non-academic coursework, work-based learning, person-centered planning, and peer mentors. The first class graduated in 2023.

#### WHAT does this bill do?

- Allows the Maryland Higher Education Commission to waive the requirement that a student with a documented disability must “carry at least 6 semester hours of courses each semester in a program leading to a degree” if an applicant for a senatorial or delegate scholarship asks.

#### WHY is this important?

- **Ensures more access to higher education for students with disabilities.** Maryland has made great strides to increase opportunities for students with disabilities to take college courses regardless of whether they are seeking a degree or not. However, access to financial aid remains a challenge.
- **Recognizes that not everyone can take more than one course or plans to seek degree.** Many students with intellectual disabilities leave high school without a diploma, making access to higher education nearly impossible. In order for them to enroll in higher education, more programs like TerpsEXCEED need to exist. In the meantime, many people take one or two courses at other colleges and universities.

HB 901 makes sense. It recognizes that people access higher education differently and for different reasons. For all of these reasons, the Council supports SB 967.

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