



DATE: February 22, 2024

BILL: SB 597: Human Services - Individuals with Disabilities and Service-Disabled Veterans Boating Fund

COMMITTEE: Education, Energy, and Environment

POSITION: Favorable with Amendments

Dear Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and members of the Education, Energy, and Environment Committee,

The Maryland Department of Disabilities (MDOD) is pleased to submit this letter of support with amendments for SB 597: Human Services - Individuals with Disabilities and Service-Disabled Veterans Boating Fund.

Senate Bill 597 would establish a grant program within MDOD supporting nonprofit organizations providing various adapted water activities for people with disabilities and service-disabled veterans.

Recreation activities such as boating, sailing, and kayaking should be welcoming for all as they promote physical, social, and emotional well-being. MDOD is thankful to the Senator for putting this bill forward and for their commitment to promoting the health and wellness of people with disabilities and service-disabled Veterans.

We support the bill, but suggest the following amendments: (1) Nonprofits offering surfing opportunities for individuals with disabilities and service-disabled veterans be eligible for the grant funding, (2) Remove the mention of "Chesapeake Bay or its tributaries."

These amendments would allow the fund to promote adapted water activities more equitably across the state and beyond the Chesapeake Bay region.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit this letter. If you have any questions please contact Lisa Belcastro, Deputy Secretary, Lisa.Belcastro@maryland.gov, (443) 941-5094.

Sincerely,

Carol A. Beatty, Secretary