



Maryland Developmental Disabilities Council

CREATING CHANGE • IMPROVING LIVES

Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

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

February 22, 2024

Position: Support with Amendments

The Maryland Developmental Disabilities Council (Council) is an independent, public policy organization that creates change to make it possible for people with developmental disabilities to live the lives they want with the support they need. Our vision is that people with and without disabilities in Maryland live, learn, work, and play together.

The Council supports SB 597 with the following amendments to ensure the bill reflects the needs of communities across Maryland:

- Adding “Adapted Water Sports Funds” the bill title by replacing “Boating Fund”
- Replacing “BOATING FUND” with “ADAPTED WATER SPORTS FUND” on page 2, line 14
- Adding “SURFING” after “CANOEING” page 2, line 16 and page 3, line 10
- Removing “ON THE CHESAPEAKE BAY OR ITS TRIBUTARIES AT LEAST 25 TIMES IN EACH OF THE PAST 3 YEARS.” on page 3, line 26-27.

WHAT does this legislation do?

- This bill creates the Individuals With Disabilities And Service–Disabled Veterans Boating Fund under the Maryland Department of Disabilities.
- The money is for grants to fund adapted water sports such as sailing, boating, kayaking, canoeing, and paddle boarding opportunities for people with disabilities including veterans with disabilities. Adapted recreation are activities modified to meet individual needs such as a mobility disability.

WHY is this legislation important?

- **Adapted recreation creates opportunity.** Adapted recreation allows people with disabilities to participate in sports and leisure activities with others. This allows everyone to have recreation opportunities regardless of their disability.
- **People with disabilities want inclusion recreation opportunities.** 10.7% of all Marylanders and 22.47% of Marylanders 18 and older are people with disabilities. But only 8 state parks in Maryland have adapted recreational equipment¹. More needs to be done to create recreation opportunities for people with disabilities.

This bill is a step in the right direction to promote more opportunities for recreation for people with disabilities. For these reasons, the Council supports SB 597.

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¹ <https://dnr.maryland.gov/publiclands/Pages/accessibleactivities.aspx?activity=AdaptiveRecreationEquipment>