

DANA JONES
Legislative District 30A
Anne Arundel County

Appropriations Committee

Subcommittees

Vice Chair, Health and Social Services

Oversight Committee on Pensions

Joint Committee on Administrative,
Executive, and Legislative Review

Vice Chair, Anne Arundel
County Delegation



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THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

Testimony of Delegate Dana Jones
Before the Environment and Transportation Committee
In Support of HB 773

Human Services - Individuals With Disabilities and Service-Disabled Veterans Boating Fund
February 21st, 2024

Chair Korman, Vice-Chair Boyce, and members of the Environment and Transportation Committee,

I come before you today to introduce HB 773, which would establish the Individuals With Disabilities and Service-Disabled Veterans Boating Fund. This legislation will increase opportunities for disabled Veterans, and people with intellectual and developmental disabilities, to enjoy accessible boating, kayaking, canoeing, paddleboarding, and surfing across Maryland.

In District 30A, here in Annapolis and Anne Arundel County, we are extremely lucky to be blessed with a number of organizations providing these services. These include Chesapeake Region Accessible Boating, Brendan Sailing, and Patriot Sailing just to name a few. However, Statewide, from Ocean City to small lakes in Prince George's County, disabled Veterans and those with intellectual and developmental disabilities are having life changing experiences with similar organizations.

The therapeutic value of on the water experiences can not be overstated. For disabled Veterans, on the water activities, specifically as a team, can foster teamwork and collaboration that can be difficult for Veterans to find when returning to civilian life. These effects are exacerbated for our disabled Veterans, as they also have to deal with additional struggles in daily life, but the freedom allowed on the water can help restore and empower these Veterans. For these reasons, I'm happy to say this bill has earned support from the Maryland General Assembly's Veterans Caucus.

For intellectually and developmentally disabled people, on the water experiences can also greatly improve their feelings of freedom and self-determination. These opportunities teach new skills,

and push participants into situations that allow them to take control and make decisions for themselves. The impact of this is much farther reaching than during, and briefly after, the experience. They increase feelings of self-confidence and happiness while reducing anxiety and improving mental health.

I am introducing this legislation alongside two amendments that include surfing as an accepted activity category, and expands eligibility to all State waterways. HB 773 will provide the Department of Disabilities another tool to support the lives of disabled Veterans and intellectually and developmentally disabled people in Maryland through therapeutic on the water experiences.

With that, I humbly request a favorable report on HB 773.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Dana Jones" with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Delegate Dana Jones