

Greetings,

As your constituent living in Ellicott City, I am writing today to ask you to support college students with disabilities in Maryland and across the country. I strongly advocate for the Governor to include funding in the annual budget bill, beginning in fiscal year 2027, to support the University of Maryland, College Park's TerpsEXCEED (Experiencing College through Education and Employment Discovery) Program, ensuring that students with intellectual disabilities have access to meaningful educational and employment opportunities.

As a former Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor and Supervisor, in the state of Maryland, I have had the opportunity to work closely with students and families from diverse backgrounds, to facilitate access to resources that promote career success. During my time with the Division of Rehabilitation Services (DORS), I have witnessed firsthand the impact that structured employment and education programs have on students' long-term independence and workforce participation. In addition, I have seen how strategic planning, interagency partnerships, and tailored support systems contribute to long-term workforce success for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

TerpsEXCEED exemplifies the best practices of inclusive higher education by providing students with intellectual disabilities the opportunity to collaborate with peers, engage in internships and job placements on and off campus, receive individualized career planning support, and develop the skills needed for long-term financial stability. These elements are vital in ensuring that all students, regardless of ability, have access to the same opportunities for growth and success.

On behalf of the Center for Transition and Career Innovation, I urge you to work with your congressional colleagues to draft and support bipartisan legislation and authorization that will provide institutional support for TerpsEXCEED students. Your leadership in this matter is crucial to ensuring that Maryland's students with intellectual disabilities receive the support they need to thrive.

Thank you for your time and attention to this important issue. I appreciate your commitment to inclusive education and look forward to your continued support.

Sincerely,
Mercedes Peterman