



DATE: February 4, 2025

BILL: HB 502 – Office of Disability Employment Advancement and Policy and Maryland as a Model Employer Initiative - Established

COMMITTEE: Appropriations

POSITION: Favorable

Dear Chair Barnes,

The Maryland Department of Disabilities (MDOD) is pleased to submit this letter in support of HB 502. This legislation creates the Office of Disability Employment Advancement and Policy within MDOD to support our work promoting employment, training, and career-readiness policies for youths and adults with disabilities.

The legislation also establishes the Maryland as a Model Employer Initiative under the newly created Office. This initiative is modelled on the State as a Model Employer Initiative, a national movement that ensures that state governments serve as model employers for private-sector businesses by committing to improve hiring, recruitment, retention, and advancement of people with disabilities in state government workforces.

Through this initiative, the Office will help recruit talented job seekers with disabilities for available State positions, work with State agencies to develop plans to hire and retain workers with disabilities, help State agencies identify and pay for reasonable accommodations for new State hires, and analyze the State's progress towards meeting its goals for including people with disabilities in the workforce. While all job seekers with disabilities will be welcome to participate in this initiative, the Office will have the flexibility to support individuals who are not eligible for other programs such as the vocational rehabilitation services offered through Division of Rehabilitation Services (DORS).

Individuals with disabilities have been historically under-utilized in the workforce despite their great skill and unique perspective. Cultivating talent among Maryland's disabled population and matching these individuals with meaningful work is not just the right thing to do, but is also critical to filling vacant jobs and keeping Maryland at the forefront of innovation. To be competitive in the global economy, employers must use the important contributions of all workers, including those with disabilities.

We respectfully request a favorable report on HB 502. Thank you for your support of the many Marylanders with disabilities ready to help build the State's workforce and grow the economy.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Carol A. Beatty".

Carol A. Beatty, Secretary

