

House Bill 502
Office of Disability Employment Advancement and Policy and Maryland as a Model Employer Initiative – Established

Appropriations
February 11th, 2025
Support

Catholic Charities of Baltimore supports HB502, which will establish the Office of Disability Employment Advancement and Policy within Maryland's Department of Disabilities. The new office will oversee strategies for disability employment and training, while the Initiative will specifically focus on improving the recruitment, hiring, retention, and advancement of people with disabilities within state government.

For a century, Catholic Charities has provided care and services to improve the lives of Marylanders in need. We accompany Marylanders as they age with dignity, support their pursuit of employment and career advancement, heal from trauma and addiction, achieve independence, prepare for educational success, and welcome immigrant neighbors into Maryland communities.

As Maryland's largest private provider of human services, we see firsthand the barriers our communities face in achieving their full potential. According to the 2019 Annual Disability Statistics Compendium, Maryland faces a stark 37 percentage point employment gap between working-age people with disabilities (40.3% employed) and those without disabilities (78.9% employed), highlighting the critical need for systemic change in employment practices.¹

In line with Catholic Charities' mission and focus areas, we support HB502 for two key reasons:

1. As an organization that serves people with disabilities and helps them work toward independence, we see firsthand how critical employment opportunities are for their financial security and dignity. Creating a dedicated office to improve employment outcomes for people with disabilities will help expand opportunities for our clients to achieve independence through meaningful careers in state government.
2. Our extensive experience providing both disability services and employment programs has shown us that systemic barriers often prevent qualified individuals with disabilities from accessing and advancing in careers. This Initiative will help break down these barriers in state government employment while setting an example for other employers to follow, creating lasting positive change for the communities we serve.

For these reasons, Catholic Charities of Baltimore respectfully urges the committee to issue a favorable report on House Bill 502.

Submitted By: Madelin Martinez, Assistant Director of Advocacy

1. Data source: 2019 Annual Disability Statistics Compendium / American Community Survey (2018) <https://apse.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/MD-Dis-Compend-Summary.pdf>