



## Maryland Developmental Disabilities Council

CREATING CHANGE • IMPROVING LIVES

House Economic Matters Committee

HB 31: Consumer Protection - Right to Repair - Powered Wheelchairs

January 21, 2025

Position: Support

The Maryland Developmental Disabilities Council (Council) creates change to make it possible for people with developmental disabilities to live the lives they want with the support they need. The Council is led by people with disabilities and their families, and it is from that perspective, that we support HB 31.

Wheelchairs, especially powered ones, are more than just devices. They are extensions of the user. They provide mobility, independence, and freedom. If a person's wheelchair malfunctions (or is not working), it hinders the person's daily life, limits their ability to move around, and do the things we all want and need to do on a daily basis. HB 31, like other "right to repair" laws empowers people with disabilities to be able fix powered wheelchairs without enduring long waits or facing limitations imposed by big corporations. **Most importantly, it ensures people have uninterrupted access to their primary means of mobility.**

### WHAT does this legislation do?

- Requires powered wheelchair manufacturers to provide the things needed (e.g., documentation, parts, embedded software, firmware, and/or tools) to repair a powered wheelchair to the owner or an independent repair provider on fair and reasonable terms and costs.
- Adds a provision for powered wheelchair repairs to Maryland's Commercial Law on unfair trade practices.

### WHY is this legislation important?

- **It ensures people have uninterrupted access to their primary means of mobility.** Powered wheelchair users often face difficult requirements imposed by manufacturers and long waits when something goes wrong with their wheelchair. Requiring manufacturers to provide the resources need – from documentation to parts and software – to owners and independent repair shops, increase independence by decreasing long wait times and difficult requirements.
- **It supports economic fairness and growth.** By giving owners *and* independent repair shops access to the things they needs to repair powered wheelchairs, this bill supports small business.
- **Brings Maryland in line with other states that prioritize the rights of wheelchair users.** The right to repair has passed in 6 other states – California, Colorado, Massachusetts, Maine, Minnesota, and New York.

HB 31 is another step toward greater independence and autonomy for people with disabilities who use powered wheelchair. For these reasons, the Council supports HB 31.

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