

Senator Bill Ferguson
President of the Senate
H-107 State House
100 State Circle
Annapolis, MD 21401

Delegate Adrienne A. Jones
Speaker of the House
H-101 State House
100 State Circle
Annapolis, MD 21401

Dear President Ferguson and Speaker Jones

Melwood Inc. is one of the nation's leading advocates, employers, and service providers for people with disabilities and their caregivers. Comprised of a family of companies, including Melwood Enterprises and Melwood Community Services, Melwood Inc. employs more than 1,600 workers – over 900 of whom are people with disabilities. We offer employment, job placement, job training, life skills for independence, support services, and youth and community recreational services to more than 3,000 people each year. For more information, visit www.Melwood.org.

Melwood would like to express our support for SB0433/HB0502 – Office of Disability Employment Advancement and Policy and Maryland as a Model Employer Initiative. According to the 2022 American Community Survey there were approximately 350,000 working age disabled individuals living in the state of Maryland. Of those 48.9% are in employment, leaving more than 50% of disabled Marylanders not engaged in employment activities. People without disabilities in Maryland have an employment rate of 81.4%.

SB0433/HB0502 look to address this gap by creating an Office of Disability Employment Advancement and Policy and an initiative to establish Maryland as a model employer for people with disabilities. All of these are positive steps to increase employment among a chronically un- and under-employed population.

Melwood supports passage of this legislation and urges the committees to favorably report this legislation. You can contact Katie Missimer, Director, Government Relations (kmissimer@melwood.org) if you have any questions.

Regards,
Jewelyn Cosgrove
Vice President, Government and Public Relations