



Maryland Developmental Disabilities Council

CREATING CHANGE • IMPROVING LIVES

House Health and Government Operations Committee

January 29, 2025

HB 141: Task Force on Loneliness and Isolation

Position: **Support with Amendments**

The Maryland Developmental Disabilities Council (DD Council), a statewide public policy organization led by people with developmental disabilities and their families, envisions Maryland as a state where people with and without disabilities live, learn, work, and play together. From the perspective, we support HB 141 with an amendment **to include the Executive Director of the DD Council, or the Executive Director's designee AND one representative of the DD Coalition.**

Research shows that the degree to which people are connected to and engaged with their communities has a powerful impact on their lives. **Being connected can also promote socialization, lessen feelings of isolation, and help people pass time. People with developmental disabilities experience significantly higher rates of loneliness and social isolation compared to people without disabilities.** This can be due to a number of reasons, including limited social opportunities, stigma, and lack of accessible options.

WHAT does this legislation do?

- Establishes the State Task Force on Loneliness and Isolation to study and make recommendations related to loneliness and isolation experienced by Marylanders.

WHY is this legislation and the amendments important?

- **As the Task Force evaluates the cause of loneliness and isolation, methods to prevent those feeling, and makes recommendations about ways to enhance social connections, the realities of people with developmental disabilities needs to be considered.**
- **Increasing engagement and connections for people with disabilities, decreases anxiety, increases feelings of safety, calm, self-worth, and connectedness; and results in positive changes in behavior.** During COVID, the Council funded over \$210,000 in small grants to more than 3300 Marylanders with developmental disabilities with the opportunity to stay connected to friends, family, work, and activities. These Engagement and Connection grants accomplished their goal reduce barriers, improve connectedness, and bridge gaps to full community life for people with developmental disabilities.

The Council strongly supports HB 141 with the addition of **the DD Council AND DD Coalition.**

Contact: Rachel London, Executive Director: RLondon@md-council.org