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House Health and Government Operations Committee

March 5, 2025

HB 1244: Maryland Developmental Disabilities Administration Waiver Advisory

Council - Establishment

Position: Support with Sponsor Amendments

The Arc Maryland is the largest statewide advocacy organization dedicated to protecting and advancing the rights and quality of life of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. We were started in the 1950s by parents who sought a better life for their children with developmental disabilities, and since that time, our network in Maryland has grown to several chapters of The Arc who provide direct services and supports to over 8,000 people with IDD and thousands more individuals who do not access our network's provider-supported services, but rely on The Arc for free information and referral services, advice, guidance, and advocacy support and training. Our connections, supports to families and people with IDD, and representations span both models of service delivery, and we advocate for the viability of all, with a lens on quality, efficiency, informed choice, modernization, and sustainability.

We support ensuring DDA's existing Waiver Advisory Council (WAC) has a **broader representation of community advocacy organizations**, like The Arc Maryland, and the responsibility to collaborate with the DDA to conduct important work with and for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

While the bill intentions were clear, there are amendments we request with the Sponsor to ensure The Arc Maryland and The Maryland Association of Community Services are at the table for these critical conversations:

Sponsor Amendments include:

- **Add The Arc Maryland and Maryland Association of Community Services explicitly as members in 7-12B-03.**
- **Add more to 7-12B-05(A)(2) to ensure the WAC provides advice and makes recommendations to DDA about service delivery and access to services, including implementation strategies regarding cost efficiency, flexibility, and system modernization.**
- **Clarify that voting members appointed under certain sections are appointed for 2 year terms, and eligible for 2 terms in a row.**



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This bill is important because it **codifies and expands** the existing DDA Waiver Advisory Council to provide advice and make recommendations to DDA about system design, service delivery, and quality enhancement strategies for the Medicaid waivers operated by the department. Additionally, it ensures the DD WAC includes representatives from the statewide organizations who have supported the DDA, have extensive experience with our state systems of support, and advocate for individuals with IDD statewide, while still maintaining the ever important balance of people with lived experience and facilitating their active involvement in the decisions that will impact their lives.

HB 1244 outlines that the purpose of the WAC is to foster meaningful engagement and establish a feedback loop with enhanced communication for all stakeholders. It will ensure the WAC adheres to person-centered thinking, diversity, equity, and inclusion principles, and evidence-based and data-driven discussion and problem solving.

Current and future beneficiaries of the Developmental Disabilities Administration's vital community supports rely on services and supports that enable them to live, work, and thrive in their communities, regardless of the service model through which they choose to receive their supports.

Sincerely,
Ande Kolp, Executive Director
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