



**HB 1244: Maryland Developmental Disabilities Administration  
Waiver Advisory Council – Establishment  
House Health and Government Operations Committee  
March 5, 2025  
Position: Support**

The Maryland Down Syndrome Advocacy Coalition (MDAC) is a coalition of the five Down syndrome organizations in Maryland as well as individuals with Down syndrome and their family members who have come together to advocate for improved quality of life for all individuals with Down syndrome throughout the state of Maryland. MDAC strongly supports HB1244 which would establish the Maryland Developmental Disabilities Administration Waiver Advisory Council.

Over the last year, MDAC has grown increasingly troubled by the DDA's lack of meaningful stakeholder engagement with participants, families, providers and professionals which has eroded trust and relationships and spiraled into the crisis evident in the current legislative session. While the DDA's website states that it "partners with people with developmental disabilities and their families to provide leadership and resources to enable these individuals in living fulfilling lives," recent actions—including the October 2024 policy changes for self-directed waiver services and the proposed "cost containment" measures currently being pursued—believe this partnership. The actions of the DDA and the tenor of its communications have been confrontational, accusatory, and disrespectful of individuals with developmental disabilities who are entitled to services, have approved budgets, have followed the rules and the law, and are attempting to live meaningful lives with dignity in the community.

MDAC is encouraged by this proposal to establish a Waiver Advisory Council with a broad, diverse membership including individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities, family members, providers, and professionals who have experience with both self-directed and provider-based waiver services, as well as advocacy groups, organizations that work with and for people with disabilities and their families, members of the Maryland General Assembly, and representatives from different state agencies that serve this population. Such a council will facilitate needed authentic partnership between the State, participants in waiver programs, and other critical stakeholders, as well as transparency and the opportunity to rebuild trust.

Collaborative problem solving is sorely needed to ensure the strength, stability, and sustainability of Medicaid waiver programs in Maryland, and, most importantly, the ability for Marylanders with intellectual and developmental disabilities to live full lives of dignity in their communities guided by their choices and decisions. MDAC believes that the Waiver Advisory Council created by HB1244 will advance these goals. For these reasons, MDAC strongly supports HB1244 and urges the committee to make a favorable report.

Respectfully submitted,

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