



January 29, 2025

Joseline A. Pena-Melnyk
Chair, Health and Government Operations Committee
240 Taylor Housing Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

RE: HB141 – Task Force on Loneliness and Isolation – Support with Amendment

Dear Chairwoman Pena-Melnyk and Members of the Committee,

On behalf of The Arc Central Chesapeake Region, we write in support of ***HB141 - Task Force on Loneliness and Isolation***, with an amendment to include people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) on the proposed State Task Force.

The Arc Central Chesapeake Region serves over 4,000 children and adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities and their families in Anne Arundel County and Maryland's Eastern Shore. Our mission is to support people with intellectual and developmental disabilities in living their chosen lives by creating opportunities, promoting respect and equity, and providing access to services.

People with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) consistently experience significantly higher rates of isolation and loneliness compared to those without disabilities. Among young adults with IDD, 85% report feeling lonely most days.¹ Another study found that adults with a disability are 51% more likely to be socially isolated, 246% more likely to report low levels of social support, and 438% more likely to be lonely compared to those without a disability.²

Further studies and reporting on the experiences of isolation and loneliness within the IDD community in Maryland would provide valuable insights into the contributing causes and factors. Such efforts would also create a platform to discuss recommendations and strategies to prevent and eliminate feelings of isolation and loneliness in this community.

We fully support the creation of a State Task Force that reflects the diverse demographics of Maryland. A better understanding of the causes of isolation and loneliness, coupled with the implementation of effective strategies to address these issues, will help eliminate current barriers and strengthen our communities.

¹ <https://covey.org/loneliness/>

² <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC7403030/>

For these reasons, we urge the committee to issue a favorable report on HB141, with the recommended amendment.

Sincerely,



Jonathon Rondeau
President & CEO

