



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

Wes Moore, Governor · Aruna Miller, Lt. Governor · Meena Seshamani, M.D., Ph.D., Secretary

February 3, 2026

The Honorable Ben Barnes
Chair, House Appropriations
121 Taylor House Office Building
6 Bladen Street
Annapolis, MD 21401-1991

RE: House Bill 226 – Department of Disabilities - Housing Programs and Affiliated Foundations - Establishment – Letter of Support with Amendments

Dear Chair Barnes and Committee Members:

The Maryland Department of Health (the Department) respectfully submits this letter of support with amendments for House Bill (HB) 226 – Department of Disabilities - Housing Programs and Affiliated Foundations - Establishment. The included amendment makes technical changes to the proposed language at § 7-117(c), as recommended by the Office of the Attorney General.

HB 226 authorizes the Maryland Department of Disabilities (MDOD) to establish one or more affiliated foundations associated with MDOD programs, including but not limited to the Maryland Assistive Technology Program (MDTAP) and the Assistive Technology Guaranteed Loan Program. Establishing affiliated foundations would enable MDOD to pursue additional sources of financial support that are otherwise unavailable to State agencies, including grant opportunities that are limited to nonprofit entities.

MDTAP provides Marylanders with disabilities access to assistive technology devices and services, including through assistive technology libraries and short-term device loans.¹ The Assistive Technology Guaranteed Loan Program assists individuals with disabilities and their families in obtaining low-interest loans to purchase equipment that supports greater independence in daily living, employment, and education.²

HB 226 represents an innovative and fiscally responsible approach to strengthening these critical programs, without exacerbating the State's current budget constraints. Further, the bill aligns with existing precedent. Chapter 443 of the Acts of 2025 (HB 717)³ similarly authorized the Department of Natural Resources to establish affiliated foundations. The Department supports

¹ Maryland Department of Disabilities, Maryland Technology Assistance Program. *MDTAP's Mission*. <https://mdod.maryland.gov/mdtap/Pages/Mission.aspx>.

² Maryland Department of Disabilities, Maryland Technology Assistance Program. *AT Low-Interest Financial Loan Program*. <https://mdod.maryland.gov/mdtap/Pages/ATLowloan.aspx>.

³ https://mgaleg.maryland.gov/2025RS/Chapters_noln/CH_443_hb0717e.pdf

HB 226 in light of Maryland's designation as a Technology First State, established by gubernatorial proclamation on August 15, 2022.⁴ Technology First affirms that individuals with disabilities may choose technology as the primary means of receiving services, or as a targeted solution. This commitment reflects Maryland's goal of ensuring all Marylanders with disabilities can access the tools they need to live, work, and participate fully in their community.

The Department partners closely with MDOD, which is an active member of the Tech First Task Force. MDOD provides essential consultation and training to DDA program staff, Coordinators of Community Services, families, and individuals with lived experiences. By expanding MDOD's ability to secure additional funding, HB 226 strengthens this interagency partnership and supports the effective implementation of Technology First principles across programs.

Expanding access to assistive technology through additional financing opportunities yields significant benefits for Marylanders with disabilities, including:

- **Maximized Independence:** Assistive technology supports greater self-sufficiency in activities of daily living, reducing reliance on in-person staff.
- **Increased Control and Choice:** Tools such as scheduling apps, electronic checklists, and remote supports allow people to receive assistance when and how they need it.
- **Enhanced Community Connection:** Communication technologies and adaptive equipment expand opportunities for employment, social engagement, and community participation.
- **Improved Quality of Life:** Assistive technology reduces frustration, supports dignity, and promotes autonomy by minimizing unnecessary barriers and power imbalances.

MDOD requested minor amendments to clarify in § 7-117(c). The Department supports MDOD's sponsor amendments. For these reasons, the Department respectfully supports passage of HB 226 with amendments. If you have any questions or require additional information, please contact Meghan Lynch, Director of Governmental Affairs, at meghan.lynch@maryland.gov.

Sincerely,



Meena Seshamani, M.D., Ph.D
Secretary of Health

⁴ Maryland Department of Health, Developmental Disabilities Administration. *Technology First*. <https://health.maryland.gov/dda/Pages/Technology-First.aspx>.