



BILL: HB 226

POSITION: FWA – Favorable with Amendments

COMMITTEE: Appropriations

DATE: January 30, 2026

Dear Chair Barnes,

The Maryland Department of Disabilities (MDOD) is pleased to offer this letter of support for **HB 226, Department of Disabilities - Housing Program and Affiliated Foundations – Established**, including amendments noted below that make technical changes to the proposed language in § 7-117(c).

This legislation is critical to the long-term sustainability and growth of essential programs for people with disabilities. HB 226 would authorize MDOD to establish an independent, non-governmental affiliated foundation. This foundation would be empowered to raise funds, apply for grants, and form private partnerships for the benefit of MDOD’s assistive technology, employment, and affordable housing programs. The legislation also codifies our existing housing program.

The affiliated foundation will support four vital units within MDOD that face funding limitations:

- **Maryland Assistive Technology Program (MDTAP):** Expansion is limited due to rising costs and uncertain future federal funding for this program, which provides a number of assistive technology services to Marylanders with disabilities.
- **Assistive Technology Guaranteed Loan Program (ATLP):** Growth is restricted by its low-interest model, and future federal grants are not guaranteed.
- **Office of Disability Employment Advancement and Policy (ODEAP):** Created last year by the Model Employer Act (HB 502/SB 233), the office’s State as a Model Employer (SAME) initiative would benefit from increased private funding.
- **Affordable Apartments Program:** Expansion for this program has been stalled since its prior private partnership and federal grants concluded.

HB 226 is modeled on the Department of Natural Resources’ HB 717, which the General Assembly passed in 2025. There is no cost to the State, as MDOD will use existing resources to create the foundation, which will then be self-supporting.

MDOD consulted with the State Ethics Commission and the Attorney General on this legislation. Based on our conversations with the Attorney General, we have requested minor amendments to clarify in § 7-117(c) that any policies MDOD develops related to the affiliated foundation would be reviewed by the Office of the Attorney General, as represented by MDOD’s assigned Assistant Attorney General, rather than by the Attorney General or his designee. This amendment is as follows:

- On page 3, in line 14, after “**THE**” insert “**OFFICE OF THE**” so that line 14 reads, “(II) SUBMIT EACH POLICY DEVELOPED TO THE **OFFICE OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL**”); and



- On page 3, in line 18, after “THE” insert “OFFICE OF THE” so that lines 18-19 read “(2) THE OFFICE OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL SHALL (I) REVIEW THE POLICIES THE DEPARTMENT DEVELOPS”.

Passing HB 226 will provide MDOD with the necessary flexibility to access private funding and partnerships, which is essential for sustaining and expanding programs and services that help Marylanders with disabilities work, learn, and live in their communities. We respectfully request a **favorable report, with amendments, on HB 226** from the Committee.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Carol A. Beatty".

Carol A. Beatty
Secretary, Department of Disabilities