
TO: House Appropriations Committee

BILL: House Bill (HB) 226 – Department of Disabilities – Housing Programs and Affiliated Foundations – Establishment

DATE: February 3, 2026

POSITION: Support

The Maryland State Board of Education (State Board) and the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) would like to share the following information in support of the Maryland Department of Disabilities' bill, **HB226**.

This legislation would authorize the Maryland Department of Disabilities (MDOD) to establish an affiliated foundation to pursue grants and public-private partnerships in support of critical disability-focused initiatives.

The Board and MSDE strongly support the intent of this legislation, particularly its focus on expanding resources for assistive technology, housing, and employment programs for Marylanders with disabilities. These priorities are closely aligned with the mission of MSDE's Division of Rehabilitation Services (DORS) to ensure equitable access, opportunity, and outcomes for individuals with disabilities.

The establishment of this foundation would allow MDOD to secure resources for the Office of Disability Employment Advancement and Policy, which was created as part of the "Model Employer Act" (HB502/SB233) during the 2025 legislative session. MSDE-DORS has been a long-time partner with MDOD in advancing the employment of Marylanders with disabilities and will continue to collaborate in furthering this important work.

Passage of House Bill 226 will provide a pathway for the State to leverage philanthropic investment, federal grants, and private-sector partnerships to supplement public funding and expand the reach and impact of existing programs, without increasing the burden on the State's General Fund. This additional flexibility will be essential as Maryland works to scale innovative strategies and better serve individuals with disabilities and their families.

The State Board and the Department request that the committee consider this information as it deliberates **HB 226**. Please contact Laurel Cratsley, Interim Executive Director of Government Affairs, at laurel.cratsley@maryland.gov or at (443) 571-5461, or Zach Hands, Executive Director of the State Board, at zachary.hands1@maryland.gov, if you would like any additional information.