

HB0226_DHCD_SUPPORT.pdf

Uploaded by: Chuck Cook

Position: FAV



WES MOORE
Governor
ARUNA MILLER
Lt. Governor
JACOB R. DAY
Secretary
JULIA GLANZ
Deputy Secretary

DATE: February 3, 2026
BILL NO.: House Bill 226
TITLE: Department of Disabilities - Housing Programs and Affiliated Foundations - Establishment
COMMITTEE: House Appropriations Committee

Letter of Support

Description of Bill:

House Bill 226 would authorize the Maryland Department of Disabilities to establish one or more independent, non-governmental foundations to support their programs. One of their programs impacted by this bill is their Affordable Apartments Program.

Background and Analysis:

The Department of Disabilities' Affordable Apartments Program sought to house non-elderly, disabled persons at 10-30 percent of the Area's Gross Median Income. Capital grants were available to owners as an incentive to designate units for occupancy at affordable rents specifically for low-income persons with disabilities. However, as the private sponsorship of the program ended, the program was not able to expand beyond its current capacity.

The establishment of nonprofits to support the Department of Disabilities' programs, like the Affordable Apartments Program, is essential to providing the necessary funding for housing for people with disabilities in the State. Oftentimes, the cost of construction to have a project meet accessibility standards is too expensive for developers. Programs like this give developers the incentive, through the capital grants, to build the types of housing that Marylanders need.

With the passage of this legislation, valuable programs like the Affordable Apartments Program can continue to expand to meet the needs of the State by offering more affordable units to Maryland residents who live with a disability.

DHCD Position

The Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development respectfully requests a **favorable** report on HB 226.



Maryland Catholic Conference_FAV_HB226.pdf

Uploaded by: Diane Arias

Position: FAV



MARYLAND
CATHOLIC
CONFERENCE

February 3, 2026

House Bill 226
Department of Disabilities - Housing Programs and Affiliated Foundations -
Establishment
House Appropriations Committee

Position: Favorable

The Maryland Catholic Conference (MCC) is the public policy representative of the three (arch)dioceses serving Maryland, which together encompass over one million Marylanders. Statewide, their parishes, schools, hospitals, and numerous charities combine to form our state's second largest social service provider network, behind only our state government.

House Bill 226 requires the Department of Disabilities to establish affordable and accessible housing programs; authorizing the Department to establish one or more affiliated foundations to work with certain programs and units of the Department to solicit and accept funds, partner with individuals and entities, and promote certain activities that support certain projects; and requiring the Department by September 1 each year to report to the Governor, the Legislative Policy Committee and the Ethics Commission certain information related to the programs.

This legislation is necessary because people with disabilities face disproportionately high housing and living costs, which affect their ability to remain stable and thrive in the community. Nationwide, people with disabilities are more likely to be low-income and rent-burdened—paying a large share of their income toward housing—while also needing accessible features that add to overall costs.¹ In Maryland, individuals with disabilities represent about 11 percent of the population, yet there are only a limited number of subsidized accessible rental units, highlighting a gap between need and supply.² High housing costs combined with additional disability-related expenses can strain household budgets, making financial stability and independent living more difficult without targeted supports.

Affordable and accessible housing is not just a matter of cost; it is essential for equity and inclusion. The lack of quality, accessible housing contributes to housing instability and increases the risk of homelessness among people with disabilities. Nearly half of unhoused individuals

¹ https://mih-inc.org/housing-info/housing-accessibility/?utm_source

² https://www.disabilitybelongs.org/2025/11/houselessness-disability-community/?utm_source

nationwide live with a disability, demonstrating how housing insecurity and disability are deeply connected.³ Accessible housing that meets the needs of people with mobility, sensory, or cognitive challenges is critical for safe, independent living and full participation in community life.

By establishing and supporting foundation-linked housing programs, House Bill 226 promotes equity in access to housing for people with disabilities. These programs can help close the gap between the number of accessible units and the number of individuals who need them, reduce cost burdens on households with disabilities, and ensure that individuals and families can live in communities where they can work, learn, and thrive. This legislation acknowledges that housing stability and accessibility are foundational to dignity, opportunity, and long-term well-being for Marylanders with disabilities.

For these reasons, the Maryland Catholic Conference asks for a favorable report on **HB 226**.

Thank you for your consideration.

³ https://mih-inc.org/housing-info/housing-accessibility/?utm_source

HB 226 favorable.pdf

Uploaded by: Karen Holcomb

Position: FAV

Testimony in SUPPORT of Senate Bill HB 226 (SB 22)

**Department of Disabilities -Housing Programs and Affiliated Foundations-
Establishment**

Appropriations Committee Hearing February 3, 2026

Submitted on January 30 ,2026

To Chair Barnes Vice -Chair Kaiser, and members of the committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in **SUPPORT of HB 226 on behalf of the Chimes organization as a volunteer Board member of Chimes International and the Chimes Maryland Advisory Council.**

Chimes mission is to foster a compassionate and inclusive community where individuals of differing abilities and behavioral health needs are supported and thrive. Chimes enables futures by providing holistic support, advocacy, and innovative solutions that enhance independence, well -being and a sense of belonging.

Chimes Maryland as the largest not-for profit provider of community services in the state supports children and adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities, autism, and other co-occurring conditions throughout the Baltimore metropolitan region. Committed to helping each individual reach their fullest potential, Chimes offers a diverse array of services tailored to every stage of life.

HB 226's inclusion of the Affordable and Accessible Housing Programs under the Department of Disabilities is an important first step in addressing this issue. The collaborative effort between an affiliated foundation established for this purpose to solicit and receive contributions from business, governmental entities, nonprofit organization, and individuals interested in the promotion of programs and units administered or by the Department provides an innovative supplemental funding mechanism.

HB 226 does an excellent job of outlining the expectations, responsibilities and financial accountability of the affiliate foundation, the Department and the Attorney General while clearly defining that “ **Contributions accepted by the Department from an affiliated foundations under this section are supplemental to and are not intended to take the place of funding that otherwise would be appropriated in the annual budget or capital budget bill for the Department.**”

Thank you for your consideration and **the Chimes urges a favorable report from this committee for HB 226.**

**Karen Holcomb
9822 Fairlee Cove Drive
Chestertown, Maryland 21620**

HB0226 support letter SEEC.pdf

Uploaded by: Katrina Kugel

Position: FAV



1300 Spring St
Suite 400
Silver Spring, MD 20910
Phone: 301.576.9000
www.SEECOnline.org

HB0226: Department of Disabilities - Housing Programs and Affiliated Foundations – Establishment

Position: Favorable

Hearing date: February 3, 2026

Committee: House Appropriations

On behalf of SEEC, a community provider of services to adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD), we encourage a favorable report on HB0226.

By adding affordable and accessible **housing** programs as an official responsibility of the Department of Disabilities as well as supporting access to **technology** and **employment**, as well as other programs by establishing affiliated foundations, this bill will increase the independence and community participation by people with disabilities. From our experience of supporting over 300 adults with I/DD we know firsthand the importance of these programs so people can direct their lives with dignity, choice, authority, and responsibility within their own communities.

One of the main tenets of the 1999 Olmstead Supreme Court case is that people with disabilities have the right to live in the most integrated, community-based setting as possible and not forced to live in institutions. The right of people with disabilities to choose where they live can only be achieved with a reliable, affordable, and accessible **housing supply**. Adding affordable and accessible housing programs as an official responsibility of the Department of Disabilities will help ensure that people with I/DD have more choice and freedom when it comes to where they live.

As Sizhe, someone we support stated, *“I have the housing supports through Jubilee, a community provider. I moved out of my parents house September of last year. I have two roommates and I live at Main Street, affordable housing for people with disabilities (25%) and neurotypical people (75%)”*. When asked what he likes about living on his own he said money management and getting the services he needs like maintenance.

The ability to choose accessible, integrated housing in one’s community means dignity, choice, and authority for all people, including those with I/DD.

At SEEC, **assistive technology** is another critical vehicle to reject ableism and reinforce choice, autonomy, and dignity for the people we support. The Department of Disabilities has been a valued partner in this initiative. This is not about fitting people to technology, it is about creating an inviting process led by the people we support and finding the right mix of high- and low-tech so they can build their own resources to communicate, be independent and included.

Robert, supported by SEEC, shared that technology is critical for his success at work. He does not communicate in a typical manner so his team communicates virtually using TEAMS and Robert also uses his iPad or the notes function on his phone when he converses with coworkers. Instead of using the call function on his phone to communicate with applicants, Robert emails them. Anything that he would normally handwrite such as an invoice number or signature on a purchase order, he makes labels for instead.

His Director stated that Robert is such a friendly and social person, and that he just suits the human resources department so well and he is an active and valuable member on the team. When asked about what he likes most about his job Robert responded that he likes making money, learning new skills all the time, and giving a hand with office tasks. He also started a retirement account.

At SEEC, we believe **meaningful employment**, like Robert's job provides, is a cornerstone for people belonging in their community. With the support of the Department of Disabilities, people with disabilities can discover their passions and prepare for meaningful roles in the workplace. It is not only about not just matching people with their ideal jobs, but also transforming lives and shaping more opportunities for everyone.

We believe in the power of alliance and the Maryland Department of Disabilities is a highly valued partner. This bill will increase opportunities and independence for people we support and we urge its passage. Thank you.

Warmly,
Karen Lee, CEO
Katrina Emmerson Kugel, Government Relations Manager

HB226 - State Board_MSDE - SUPPORT.docx.pdf

Uploaded by: Laurel Cratsley

Position: FAV

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.

HB 226 - Written Testimony.pdf

Uploaded by: Lorna-Mae Silcott

Position: FAV



TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB 226

TO: Chair, House Appropriations Committee

FROM: The Maryland Statewide Independent Living Council

DATE: January 30, 2026

RE: HB 226 – Department of Disabilities – Housing Program and Affiliated Foundations – Establishment

The Core Issue: The Housing Gap

Maryland faces a critical shortage of integrated, accessible, and affordable housing for individuals with disabilities. Current systems often leave this population trapped in congregate settings or facing housing instability due to a lack of specialized oversight and dedicated funding streams.

Why HB 226 is Essential

This bill moves beyond "status quo" advocacy by establishing a formal infrastructure for disability-specific housing development:

- **Centralized Expertise:** Creates a dedicated Housing Program within the Department of Disabilities to streamline navigation and resource allocation.
- **Private-Public Synergy:** Authorizes Affiliated Foundations, allowing the Department to leverage private investment and philanthropic grants that are currently inaccessible through state budgets alone.
- **Economic Efficiency:** Stable housing reduces state expenditures on emergency services, institutionalization, and crisis management.

The Impact

HB 226 transforms housing from a "service" into a right. By fostering foundations specifically tasked with disability housing, Maryland can bypass traditional bureaucratic bottlenecks and accelerate the construction of universally designed homes.

"Housing is the foundation of independence. Without a stable place to live, all other state-funded disability services—from employment support to healthcare—are significantly less effective."

Conclusion

HB 226 provides the structural "teeth" necessary to solve Maryland's disability housing crisis. It is a proactive, fiscally responsible approach to ensuring all citizens live with dignity in the community.

We strongly urge a FAVORABLE report on HB 226.

HB226 - MDOD Departmental.pdf

Uploaded by: Mary Manzoni

Position: FAV

Dear Chair and Members of the Committee,

Maryland Works respectfully submits this letter in strong support of **HB226, Department of Disabilities – Housing Programs and Affiliated Foundations – Establishment.**

Maryland Works serves as a coordinating entity for employment opportunities for people with disabilities and works closely with State agencies, providers, and employers to advance economic mobility, independence, and inclusion. We strongly support this legislation because it creates a flexible, cost-neutral tool that will allow the Maryland Department of Disabilities (MDOD) to strengthen and sustain critical programs that directly support employment, assistive technology, and affordable housing for people with disabilities.

This bill authorizes MDOD to establish one or more independent, non-government affiliated foundations to raise private funds, pursue grants, and form public-private partnerships. These foundations would provide essential supplemental support to MDOD programs that face rising costs, limited growth capacity, or uncertain future federal funding, while imposing **no fiscal cost to the State.**

Maryland Works is particularly supportive of the potential impact on the **Maryland Technology Assistance Program (MDTAP)** and the **Assistive Technology Guaranteed Loan Program (ATLP)**. Assistive technology is foundational to employment success for many individuals with disabilities. MDTAP's lending libraries and ATLP's low-interest loan programs directly support workforce participation, yet both programs face growth limitations due to funding constraints. The ability to leverage private philanthropy through an affiliated foundation would help stabilize and expand access to these critical employment supports.

We also strongly support the bill's benefit to the **Office of Disability Employment Advancement and Policy (ODEAP)**, which leads the State as a Model Employer initiative. As Maryland Works collaborates with State agencies and employers to improve hiring and retention of people with disabilities, we recognize that philanthropic partners often prefer to donate to non-governmental entities for tax and administrative reasons. This legislation removes that barrier and enables private investment in disability employment innovation and systems change.

Finally, the bill's support for the **Affordable Apartments Program** aligns with Maryland Works' understanding that stable, accessible housing is inseparable from employment success. Allowing MDOD to reestablish and expand private partnerships through affiliated

foundations will help ensure that housing initiatives for people with disabilities can grow beyond their current capacity.

HB226 follows successful models already in State law and mirrors legislation enacted for other agencies, such as the Department of Natural Resources and the Maryland Stadium Authority. It provides MDOD with modern, responsible tools to strengthen programs without increasing State spending, while increasing accountability, innovation, and sustainability.

For these reasons, Maryland Works urges a **favorable report** on HB226. We appreciate the Committee's consideration and its continued commitment to advancing opportunities for Marylanders with disabilities.

Respectfully submitted,

Mary Manzoni



CEO
Maryland Works



Phone
410.381.8660



Email
info@mdworks.com



Address
10270 Old Columbia Rd. Ste 100
Columbia, MD 21046

POG_Testimony_HB226 housing pilot programm.pdf

Uploaded by: Mat Rice

Position: FAV



People On the Go Maryland

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF House Bill 226 (HB 226)

"Department of Disabilities – Housing Programs and Affiliated Foundations – Establishment"

Primary Sponsor: Chair, Appropriations Committee (By Request – Departmental – Disabilities)

Committee: Appropriations

POSITION: FAVORABLE

Hearing 2/03 2026 at 1:00 p.m.

To the Honorable Members of the House Appropriations Committee:

People On the Go Maryland (POG) is a statewide self advocacy/systems advocacy organization run for and by people with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities. Our mission is to empower individuals with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities to speak for themselves, make their own decisions, and live the lives they choose in their communities. We represent the voices of Marylanders with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities who seek independence, dignity, and the fundamental right to live in communities of their choice.

The Housing Crisis Facing Marylanders with Intellectual and/or Developmental Disabilities

People with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities in Maryland and across the nation face a severe and multifaceted housing crisis. Adults with disabilities experience poverty at more than twice the rate of their non-disabled peers, with many relying on Supplemental Security Income (SSI) as their primary source of income. The maximum federal SSI benefit of just \$914 per month is insufficient to afford a one-bedroom apartment at fair market rent in any state in the United States, even if 100% of the benefit were allocated to housing costs.

This financial precarity is compounded by a critical shortage of accessible housing. The United States faces a national deficit of over 7 million affordable housing units. For people with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities, this shortage is even more acute: less than 5% of housing nationwide is accessible for individuals with moderate mobility difficulties, and less than 1% is accessible for wheelchair users. As a result, an estimated 7 million renters with disabilities are moderately or severely cost-burdened, spending over 30% of their income on rent and placing them at high risk of eviction.

The convergence of low incomes and a lack of suitable housing places many people with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities at imminent risk of homelessness or unnecessary institutionalization. Nearly 25% of the more than 580,000 people experiencing homelessness on any given night in the U.S. have a disability. When individuals with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities become homeless, they struggle to navigate fragmented support systems, increasing their vulnerability. Simultaneously, the housing shortage forces many into institutional settings like nursing homes or large congregate facilities against their will, stripping them of their independence and violating their civil rights.

The Proven Benefits of Community-Based Housing and Integration

A robust body of research demonstrates that community-based housing provides far superior outcomes for people with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities compared to institutional settings. Studies consistently show that community living leads to improved quality of life, greater autonomy and personal choice, enhanced social integration, increased independence, and better overall health outcomes.

People with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities who live in community-based settings develop broader social networks, more personal relationships, and greater participation in community activities. They experience increased self-determination and control over their daily lives, from choosing what they eat to deciding how they spend their time. This empowerment is a critical component of dignity and mental health. Research has documented that moving from institutions to community residences is associated with increased independence and a decrease in maladaptive behaviors. Smaller-scale residential communities are better equipped to provide person-centered support that adapts to each individual's unique and changing needs.

Moreover, housing is a critical social determinant of health. Stable, affordable, and accessible housing is directly linked to improved physical and mental health outcomes. The "Housing First" model, which provides immediate access to permanent housing with voluntary supportive services,

has been proven to significantly increase housing stability, reduce homelessness, improve quality of life and clinical health indicators, and reduce costly emergency department visits and hospitalizations.

The Legal Imperative: Olmstead v. L.C. and the Integration Mandate

The right to live in the community is not merely a preference but a fundamental civil right. The U.S. Supreme Court's landmark 1999 decision in *Olmstead v. L.C.* established that the unjustified segregation of people with disabilities in institutions constitutes discrimination prohibited by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). The Court held that states must provide services in the most integrated setting appropriate to an individual's needs.

Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg powerfully articulated that institutional confinement "perpetuates unwarranted assumptions that persons so isolated are incapable or unworthy of participating in community life." This integration mandate is not optional—it is a constitutional requirement. However, the promise of *Olmstead* remains unfulfilled for many. In 2023, an estimated 692,000 people, primarily individuals with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities, were on waiting lists for Medicaid Home and Community-Based Services waivers. These long waiting lists effectively trap individuals in institutions or leave them without necessary support in the community, undermining both the spirit and letter of the law.

House Bill 226 directly addresses this gap by mandating that the Department of Disabilities establish housing programs, elevating housing to a core statutory requirement. This legislation is essential to ensuring that Maryland complies with its *Olmstead* obligations and upholds the civil rights of all its citizens with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities.

The Essential Role of Affiliated Foundations in Sustainable Funding

The creation of affordable and accessible housing requires substantial and sustained investment. While government funding is essential, it is often insufficient to meet the scale of need. Affiliated foundations provide a vital mechanism to supplement public resources, foster innovation, and create sustainable funding streams.

Philanthropic foundations play an indispensable role in the disability housing ecosystem. Nationally, over 1,250 foundations actively fund independent housing for people with disabilities, holding collective assets of approximately \$879 billion. These foundations support diverse activities, from grants for construction of new affordable housing to funding individualized support models that give people with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities greater control over their care and support services.

Successful state programs in New York and Virginia demonstrate the power of partnerships between government, developers, service providers, and foundations. New York's Integrated Supportive Housing Program encourages collaborations that create non-certified housing opportunities with rental subsidies and capital funding. Virginia's State Rental Assistance Program

provides rental assistance specifically for individuals with developmental disabilities, allowing them to choose their own housing in the private market while receiving separate support services.

House Bill 226 s authorization for the Department of Disabilities to create affiliated foundations mirrors these successful models. The bill includes robust safeguards: foundations must operate under policies approved by the Attorney General and State Ethics Commission, undergo annual independent audits, and submit annual reports to the Governor and Legislature. Importantly, foundation contributions are supplemental and not intended to replace regular state appropriations, ensuring that the state maintains its core funding responsibilities.

Positive Outcomes Expected from House Bill 226

If enacted, **House Bill 226** will have profound and far-reaching positive impacts for people with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities in Maryland:

- Creation of a statutory mandate for housing programs, ensuring that housing is a core priority of the Department of Disabilities, not an optional service.
- Expansion of affordable, accessible, and integrated housing options, allowing more Marylanders with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities to live in communities of their choice.
- Reduction in unnecessary institutionalization and homelessness by providing viable community-based alternatives.
- Enhanced compliance with the Olmstead integration mandate and protection of the civil rights of people with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities.
- Establishment of sustainable funding mechanisms through affiliated foundations, enabling innovation and reducing sole reliance on state appropriations.
- Improved health outcomes, as stable housing serves as a critical foundation for physical and mental well-being.
- Greater independence, autonomy, and self-determination for individuals with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities, fostering dignity and empowerment.
- Relief for aging family caregivers by providing secure housing options for their adult children with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities.

This legislation represents a significant policy advancement that acknowledges housing as a fundamental human right and creates the infrastructure necessary to make that right a reality for thousands of Marylanders.

People with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities deserve the same opportunities as all Marylanders to live independently, participate fully in their communities, and pursue their dreams. Housing is the foundation upon which all other aspects of community life are built. **House Bill 226** provides the legislative framework and sustainable funding mechanisms necessary to address the severe housing crisis facing this population. It upholds the integration mandate of the Olmstead decision, recognizes housing as a critical social determinant of health, and creates pathways for innovation through public-private partnerships.

The evidence is clear and compelling: community-based housing leads to better outcomes, greater independence, and improved quality of life for people with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities. By mandating the establishment of housing programs and authorizing affiliated foundations, this legislation represents a crucial investment in human dignity, civil rights, and the social fabric of Maryland.

For these reasons, People On the Go Maryland respectfully requests a favorable report on **House Bill 226**

Contact Information:

Mat Rice, Executive Director
People On the Go Maryland
Email: mat@pogmd.org
Phone: 410-925-5706

HB226.DDCouncil. Support.pdf

Uploaded by: Rachel London

Position: FAV



Maryland Developmental Disabilities Council

CREATING CHANGE • IMPROVING LIVES

Senate Finance Committee

HB 226: Department of Disabilities – Housing Programs and Affiliated Foundations - Establishment

February 3, 2026

Position: Support

The Maryland Developmental Disabilities Council (Council) creates change to make it possible for people with developmental disabilities to live the lives they want with the support they need. As such, we support efforts to increase opportunities for Marylanders with and without disabilities to live, learn, work, and play together. HB 226 does just that.

WHAT does this legislation do?

- HB 226 lets the Maryland Department of Disabilities (MDOD) create one or more independent, non-government foundations to support its programs. There is no cost. MDOD will do this with existing resources, and the resulting foundation will support itself.
- These foundations could raise funds, apply for grants, and enter into partnerships to benefit MDOD programs that support assistive technology, employment, and affordable housing for people with disabilities.

WHY is this legislation important?

- **This bill increases access to funding and partnership opportunities for MDOD's critical programs.** Two programs that provide assistive technology for people with disabilities; the Office of Disability Employment Advancement and Policy to improve policies to help people with disabilities get and keep jobs in State government; and the Affordable Apartments Program that provides affordable, accessible housing units to people with disabilities.
- **More funding and partnerships increase access to the critical support people with disabilities need to live, learn, work, and play in the community.** 24% of Marylanders have a disability.

MDOD's work to increase access and opportunity for Marylanders with disabilities is done with limited State and federal funding. The programs provide critical support to people with disabilities, and the ability to expand them would greatly benefit Marylanders. Given the importance of these programs, and the need of Marylanders with disabilities, this no cost bill makes sense.

Contact: Rachel London, Executive Director, RLondon@md-council.org

2026 TCC HB 226 House Side.pdf

Uploaded by: Robyn Elliott

Position: FAV



Committee: **Appropriations**

Bill Numbers: **House Bill 226 - Department of Disabilities – Housing Programs and Affiliated Foundations – Establishment**

Hearing Date: **February 4, 2026**

Position: **Support**

The Coordinating Center supports House Bill 226, which establishes affordable and accessible housing as a core responsibility of the Department of Disabilities and authorizes the creation of affiliated foundations to support this work. This legislation reflects a critical understanding that housing stability is foundational to health, independence, and community integration for individuals with disabilities.

Our organization provides care coordination to nearly 10,000 Marylanders annually through Maryland Medicaid programs, including the Community First Choice Program, and other home and community-based service waivers. Many of the individuals we serve experience significant barriers related to social determinants of health, particularly access to affordable and accessible housing. Our coordinators (i.e., Case Managers, Supports Planners, Services Coordinators, Coordinators of Community Service) work daily with individuals transitioning from institutional settings to the community, as well as individuals experiencing homelessness or housing instability who require coordinated, long-term supports.

From a case management perspective, this legislation is especially important because it strengthens the State’s ability to expand housing options that are integrated, accessible, and responsive to individual needs. Stable housing is often the linchpin that allows individuals with disabilities to access health care, maintain employment, and remain safely in their communities. Without appropriate housing, individuals with complex medical or behavioral health needs face increased risk of institutionalization, emergency service utilization, and poor health outcomes.

As The Department implements the housing programs and partnerships authorized under this bill, it will be essential to incorporate the practical expertise of case managers and care coordinators. Case managers bring direct, frontline insight into



the barriers individuals face in securing and maintaining housing, as well as the supports necessary for long-term stability. Meaningful input from case management professionals can help ensure that housing initiatives are person-centered, equitable, and effective for individuals with the highest levels of need.

House Bill 226 represents an important step forward in aligning housing policy with the lived realities of Marylanders with disabilities. We respectfully urge a favorable report and encourage continued engagement with case management professionals as these programs are developed and implemented.

If any additional information would be helpful, please contact Robyn Elliott at relliott@policypartners.net or (443) 926-3443.

MDOD_HB0226_FWA_APP_2026.01.30.pdf

Uploaded by: Anne Blackfield

Position: FWA



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,

Carol A. Beatty

Carol A. Beatty
Secretary, Department of Disabilities

MDOA - Written FWA HB226 - MDOD Affiliated Foundat

Uploaded by: Carmel Roques

Position: FWA



Wes Moore | Governor

Aruna Miller | Lt. Governor

Carmel Roques | Secretary

Date: January 30, 2026

Bill Number: **HB 226**

Bill Title: Department of Disabilities - Housing Programs and Affiliated Foundations - Establishment

Committee: Appropriations

MDOA Position: FAVORABLE WITH AMENDMENTS

The Department of Aging (MDOA) thanks the Chair and Committee members for the opportunity to submit this favorable with amendments testimony for House Bill (HB) 226 - Department of Disabilities - Housing Programs and Affiliated Foundations - Establishment.

The Maryland Department of Aging (MDOA) serves as Maryland's State Unit of Aging, administering federal and state funding for core services for older adults, overseeing the Area Agency on Aging (AAA) network at the local level that provides these services, and planning for Maryland's older adult population. MDOA strongly supports the Maryland Department of Disabilities (MDOD) in bringing forward SB 22. This bill would authorize MDOD to establish one or more independent, non-government foundations that could raise outside funds, apply for grants, and form private partnerships to benefit sorely needed initiatives for people with disabilities. These new foundations will allow Marylanders with disabilities to benefit from more funding outside of government. It will fund more affordable accessible housing and assistive technology for people with disabilities as well as the state's Office of Disability Employment Advancement and Policy. In times of limited government funding and growing populations, needs, and reductions in federal support, MDOA commends MDOD for adopting this type of expansive approach to its work. MDOA supports the adoption of MDOD's technical amendments.



Wes Moore | Governor

Aruna Miller | Lt. Governor

Carmel Roques | Secretary

Deepening philanthropic partnerships and leveraging varied funding sources to deliver more useful services to more people with disabilities directly aligns with MDOA's Longevity-Ready Maryland Plan¹, which will work to make Maryland more prepared for our increasingly longer lives over the next 10 years.

For these reasons, the Department of Aging respectfully urges a **favorable with amendments** report for HB 226. If you have any questions, please contact Andrea Nunez, Legislative Director, at andrea.nunez@maryland.gov or (443) 414-8183.

Sincerely,

Carmel Roques
Secretary
Maryland Department of Aging

¹ MD Department of Aging website, "Longevity Ready Maryland," *available at*: <https://lrm.maryland.gov/>

HB 226- APP- MDH - LOSWA.pdf

Uploaded by: Meghan Lynch

Position: FWA



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>.

(HB 226) Appropriations Informational Testimony -

Uploaded by: Jennifer Allgair

Position: INFO



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GENEAU M. THAMES

STATE ETHICS COMMISSION

45 CALVERT STREET, 3rd FLOOR
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401
410-260-7770 / 1-877-669-6085

JENNIFER K. ALLGAIR
Executive Director
WILLIAM J. COLQUHOUN
General Counsel
KATHERINE P. THOMPSON
Staff Counsel
ANA L. HENRY
Assistant General Counsel
PANSY S. WATSON
Assistant Counsel

February 2, 2026

House Bill 226 – Department of Disabilities – Housing Programs and Affiliated Foundations

Testimony Before the Appropriations Committee

The State Ethics Commission provides this informational written testimony to explain the impact of this proposed legislation on the agency. This legislation provides for exemptions from certain conflict of interest provisions of the Public Ethics Law for agency employees serving in specific roles with the agency-affiliated foundation. The legislation is consistent with prior legislation allowing similar exemptions for the employees of other State agencies who serve in various capacities with other agency-affiliated foundations with other State agencies such as the Maryland Stadium Authority, the Historic St. Mary's City Commission, and the Department of Natural Resources. In those instances, the exemption provisions for affiliated foundation activities are contained in the agency's specific enabling statute for the affiliated foundation rather than in the provisions of the Public Ethics Law.

House Bill 226 will not have a fiscal impact on the State Ethics Commission. The legislation would have a small operational impact on the agency. The State Ethics Commission will be required to work with the Department of Disabilities (DoD) to provide guidance and receive reports related to DoD officials or employees serving as an official or director of an agency affiliated foundation.