

SB583 Favorable Testimony

Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Committee:

My name is Michele Gregory. I am a Maryland resident, a caregiver, and a local elected official. I am submitting this testimony in support of Senate Bill 583.

Senate Bill 583 requires the Deputy Secretary for Developmental Disabilities to provide public notice before making changes to the Self-Directed Services Manual, to allow for at least 90 days of public comment, and to refrain from adopting changes until that public comment period has concluded.

This bill is fundamentally about transparency and accountability in a system that directly affects the daily lives of Marylanders with developmental disabilities and the families who support them.

The Self-Directed Services Manual is not a minor administrative document. It governs how individuals and families hire caregivers, manage approved budgets, and access critical supports that allow them to live in their homes and communities. For many of us, it determines whether medically fragile individuals remain stable, whether caregivers can continue providing care, and whether individuals can maintain independence and quality of life.

State law defines self-directed services as empowering individuals to exercise employer and budgetary authority over their services. That empowerment loses meaning if the policies governing those services can be changed without meaningful notice or opportunity for public input.

Families who self-direct are not passive recipients of services. They are employers. They are care coordinators. They are compliance managers. They are often filling gaps in a healthcare system that is already strained. When changes to the Manual are implemented without structured public engagement, the consequences can be immediate and destabilizing.

This is particularly true for rural families, who often face limited provider availability and must travel long distances for medical and therapeutic services. Policy changes can disproportionately affect those who already operate with the least margin for disruption.

Senate Bill 583 does not prevent the Administration from updating or improving the Manual. It simply requires notice, a defined 90-day comment period, and consideration of stakeholder input before changes are finalized. That is not an unreasonable burden. It is a standard of good governance.

Transparent processes produce stronger policy. When stakeholders have the opportunity to provide feedback, unintended consequences can be identified before implementation. This reduces confusion, prevents hardship, and ultimately supports more stable outcomes for individuals and families.

Marylanders with developmental disabilities deserve systems that are predictable, transparent, and accountable. Families who self-direct deserve to be heard before rules governing their care are altered.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge a favorable report on Senate Bill 583.

Thank you for your consideration.

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