

Written Testimony in Support of Senate Bill 583
Developmental Disabilities Administration – Self-Directed Services Manual – Public
Comment
Senate Finance Committee
February 24, 2026

Dear Chair and Members of the Senate Finance Committee,

My name is Krista Ennis. I am a CPA specializing in taxation, and I am the mother of my 24-year-old son, who participates in Maryland’s Self-Directed Services program through the Developmental Disabilities Administration (DDA). I am writing in strong support of Senate Bill 583 because the current process for implementing policy changes is causing real harm to families like mine.

As a CPA, I was trained in one of the most volatile professional environments in modern history. During COVID-19, my profession faced constant upheaval—moving tax deadlines, new federal relief programs like the Employee Retention Credit and Payroll Protection Program, and nonstop regulatory changes. My job was to absorb complex new rules immediately and help others navigate uncertainty. I know how to pivot. I have done it professionally, successfully, and under pressure.

But nothing in my professional experience prepared me for the instability created by repeated, abrupt changes to my son’s Self-Directed Services.

When my son entered the program three years ago, I worked tirelessly to build a stable support system. I recruited, hired, and trained his staff. I coordinated with vendors and the Fiscal Management Agency. I built a team of people who understand him, who keep him safe, and who allow him to live with dignity in his community. That stability is not a luxury—it is essential to his health, safety, and quality of life.

Yet over the past 15 months, that stability has been repeatedly undermined.

- On **October 24, 2024**, the DDA released a new manual with just **14 days’ notice** before implementation.
- In **late April 2025**, another manual was issued, effective **May 9, 2025**, reducing wages and threatening our ability to retain qualified staff.
- On **June 9, 2025**, a Waiver Amendment was proposed. Families submitted public comments in good faith, but those voices were not meaningfully reflected in the outcome.
- On **September 21, 2025**, another manual was released, effective **October 7, 2025**, eliminating Day-to-Day Administration—supports that the legislature itself had recognized as necessary.
- Most recently, on **February 4, 2026**, the DDA sent an email stating, “Partnership is at the heart of this work,” while quietly linking policy changes that had already taken effect **the day before families were notified.**

Five major changes in 15 months. Some with two weeks’ notice. One with no notice at all.

This is not partnership. This is not transparency. This is not stability.

Each time this happens, families like mine are forced into crisis mode. We must immediately reassess budgets, reassure staff, prevent resignations, and protect continuity of care. We must absorb the administrative and emotional burden while shielding our loved ones from disruption and fear.

I am fortunate to have professional skills, financial literacy, and schedule flexibility. Even so, I am struggling to keep up. I am exhausted by the constant uncertainty and the fear that the carefully built support system my son depends on could unravel at any moment.

Many families do not have my resources. They cannot simply “pivot.” They may lose staff. Their loved ones may lose stability. And when stability is lost, individuals with developmental disabilities can experience regression, behavioral crises, hospitalization, or worse.

These are not abstract policy changes. These are decisions that affect whether real people are safe, supported, and able to live meaningful lives.

Senate Bill 583 offers a simple, reasonable solution: transparency, notice, and the opportunity for meaningful public comment before changes are implemented. Ninety days is not an obstacle—it is a basic safeguard. It allows families to prepare. It allows stakeholders to provide informed feedback. It allows the DDA to benefit from the real-world expertise of those living this system every day.

Most importantly, it restores the principle that families and individuals are partners—not afterthoughts—in decisions that shape their lives.

Self-direction cannot exist without stability. It cannot exist without trust. And it cannot exist without a voice.

I urge you, on behalf of my son and thousands of Maryland families like mine, to issue favorable support on Senate Bill 583.

Respectfully,
Krista Ennis
Parent