

## **Oral Testimony in Support of SB0583**

Good afternoon, Chair and members of the Committee.

My name is Michelle Shramek. I live in Forest Hill, Maryland, and my adult son, Matthew, depends on Self-Directed Services to live safely in his own home and community.

Senator Jennings, thank you for bringing forward SB0583. Your bill is needed, and I fully support its purpose. It recognizes something families have been experiencing for years — that major changes to Self-Directed Services should not happen without transparency and public input.

The way policy is repeatedly revised and communicated throughout the year — whether through multiple four-hundred-page manual revisions in a single calendar year or even through newsletters or emails that quietly “clarify” or “update” expectations — must stop. Every proposed change should be submitted for public input. For teams supporting participants, this peppering of “policy updates” as they are called creates constant instability.

Self-direction requires careful coordination between the participant, board certified behavior analysts, coordinators of community services, the support broker, fiscal management agencies, and direct support professionals. When rules are constantly shifting teams are left operating under a cloud of uncertainty. We are left wondering whether we are unknowingly out of compliance because we missed a buried update in an email sent or another revision of DDA’s manual without any formal notice. Uncertainty creates fear. It creates administrative chaos, and it makes it nearly impossible for teams to operate with confidence and consistency. Participants cannot meaningfully engage in a process that is fragmented at best and contradictory at worst.

As a trained educator, I am witnessing professionals struggle to track scattered updates across manuals, newsletters, and informal communications. Expecting families to function as compliance auditors just to keep their loved ones safe at home is unreasonable.

SB0583 is necessary. But to truly protect participants, it must require notice and public comment whenever DDA changes Self-Directed Services policy in any form — not only when the manual itself is amended.

Families deserve consistency. Teams deserve clarity and compliance should not feel like a moving target.

Thank you, Senator Jennings, for standing up for Marylanders with developmental disabilities. I respectfully ask that this bill be strengthened to ensure full transparency and accountability in all changes to Self-Directed Services.

Thank you, Michelle Shramek