



Maryland Developmental  
Disabilities Council  
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## Senate Finance Committee

### HB 1117: Virginia L. Jones Alzheimer's Disease and Related Dementia Council and the Advisory Stakeholder Group on Autism-Related Needs – Recommendations for Elopement Devices

April 1, 2026

Position: **Support with Amendments**

Maryland Developmental Disabilities Council (Council) and The Arc Maryland are statewide organizations that work to protect and advance the rights and quality of life of people with disabilities and their families. Both organizations are members of the Advisory Stakeholder Group on Autism-Related Needs (ASGAN). We participate in discussions, make recommendations about policy, and provide input to the Coordinator for Autism Strategy and on the Maryland Strategic Plan for Autism-Related Needs. As such, we support HB 1117 with the following amendments that better align with the function and responsibility of ASGAN and the Coordinator for Autism Strategy:

- Page 4, Line 8: Strike 7-112.1 and ADD 7-111.1
- Page 5, Lines 10-12: (B) ~~THE ADVISORY STAKEHOLDER GROUP ON AUTISM-RELATED NEEDS STATE COORDINATOR FOR AUTISM STRATEGY MAY RECOMMEND~~ SHALL, AS PART OF THE STRATEGIC PLAN REQUIRED UNDER SECTION 7-111 OF THIS SUBTITLE, MAKE RECOMMENDATIONS TO ADDRESS THE RISKS OF WANDERING AND ELOPEMENT, INCLUDING THE USE OF ELOPEMENT RESPONSE DEVICES AS SAFETY TOOLS FOR INDIVIDUALS WHO ARE AT RISK OF ELOPEMENT BECAUSE OF AUTISM.
- In Maryland Human Services Article 7-111(c), ADD a new 7-111(c)(7): *STRATEGIES TO ADDRESS WANDERING AND ELOPEMENT, INCLUDING THE USE OF ELOPEMENT RESPONSE DEVICES, AS SPECIFIED IN 7-111.1.*”

#### **WHAT does this bill do?**

- Allows the Dementia Council and ASGAN to “recommend the use of elopement response devices as safety tools for individuals who are at risk of elopement because of autism.”

Elopement response devices are designed to prevent and manage wandering in children and adults, including older adults. They are things like door alarms, wearable GPS trackers, and sensors. Some families choose to use these assistive technology devices to reduce the risks associated with wandering, and they can provide a level of security and safety to families and

staff. The choice and use of assistive technology devices is best left to families with the support from trained professionals, like occupational therapists or licensed assistive technology professionals, who can do an assessment of the person, environment, and available devices, and make specific recommendations based on the person's unique needs.

As members of ASGARN, we understand that families of people with disabilities, and older adults need and want more information, resources, and better access to devices to keep their loved ones safe. ASGARN can and should make policy based recommendations, but should not make recommendations about devices for specific people, products, or vendors. Since current language could be interpreted to require that, we support HB 1117 with the amendments outlined above.

Contact: Rachel London, Council Executive Director: [RLondon@md-council.org](mailto:RLondon@md-council.org)