



SENATE BILL 583 Developmental Disabilities Administration – Self-Directed Services Manual – Public Comment

POSITION: Favorable with Amendments

COMMITTEE: Senate Finance Committee

DATE: February 24, 2026

Pathfinders for Autism (PFA) is Maryland’s largest autism organization dedicated to helping individuals, parents, and professionals find resources, support, and training while working to increase awareness of autism spectrum disorders. We accomplish this through a variety of programs and services with a focus on safety, community, and resources. We partner with many organizations to work collaboratively to serve not only the autism community, but the broader intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) community across the state.

SB583 represents an important and practical step toward restoring transparency and accountability in how policies are developed and implemented within Maryland’s developmental disabilities service delivery system. Policies contained in the Self-Directed Services Manual influence access to services, participant autonomy, and the consistency of service delivery. Changes to definitions, requirements, or interpretations can have wide-reaching impacts on individuals and families who depend on stable and predictable rules.

For many years, the Maryland Developmental Disabilities Administration (DDA) followed an effective process when considering policy changes to Self-Directed Services. Draft policies were vetted with advocates and stakeholders prior to release and then opened for a 30-day public comment period to allow input from the broader community. This approach was collaborative and helped identify operational concerns before implementation, preventing unintended consequences and dysfunction within an otherwise efficient and effective service delivery model.

Recent updates to PolicyStat and other guidance sources have occurred with little or no transparency undermining trust and disrupting services. Changes of this significance must be balanced, transparent, and public; not quietly implemented. SB583 will assist in returning to a proven transparent framework.

PFA requests amendments to ensure the transparency and public comment requirements apply to all policy vehicles that govern services under the Developmental Disabilities Administration, including PolicyStat and any formal policy guidance used by the Administration that affects eligibility, access, definitions, service parameters, or implementation requirements. PFA also recommends amendments to require consistency, public participation before policies take effect and greater accountability for decisions that directly impact participants,

For these reasons, PFA respectfully urges the Committee to issue a Favorable report with Amendments to SB583.

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