



The Arc Maryland
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SB0199: Individuals With Disabilities and Service-
Disabled Veterans Boating Fund - Eligible Companions
Senate Finance Committee
January 28, 2026
Position: Support

The Arc Maryland is a statewide training, support, and advocacy organization that is dedicated to advancing and preserving the rights and quality of lives of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities and their families.

We support SB0199 and deeply appreciate the Sponsor's initiative to bring together stakeholders for input to strengthen this law so more individuals with disabilities can access water sports and other adapted water activities. The Individuals With Disabilities And Service-Disabled Veterans Boating Fund under the Maryland Department of Disabilities provides grants to fund adapted water sports such as sailing, boating, kayaking, canoeing, and paddle boarding opportunities for people with disabilities including veterans with disabilities. "Adapted recreation" are activities that are modified to meet the individual needs of a person with a disability, such as a mobility disability.

This bill corrects a critical omission that advocates did not previously consider in the passage of the 2024 legislation that created this program: the option for people to have an eligible companion with them in their adapted activities to provide necessary support to the person with the disability. In this bill, the definition of an eligible companion ensures people may be able to access opportunities under this program with the support they need to facilitate their participation.

"ELIGIBLE COMPANION" MEANS AN ACCOMPANYING FAMILY MEMBER OR DIRECT SUPPORT PROFESSIONAL OF AN INDIVIDUAL WITH DISABILITIES OR OF A SERVICE-DISABLED VETERAN PARTICIPATING IN SAILING, BOATING, KAYAKING, CANOEING, PADDLEBOARDING, OR SURFING ACTIVITIES.

Adapted recreation creates opportunity and allows people with disabilities to



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participate in sports and leisure activities with others. In Maryland, 24% of all people 18 and older are people with disabilities, but only 8 state parks in Maryland have adapted recreational equipment¹. These recreational opportunities are vital to physical and social well-being, and this grant program, as amended to include eligible companion participation, will ensure people with disabilities, who also need personal assistance by someone trained to address their needs, have equitable access to boating, surfing, and other adapted recreation in Maryland.

For these reasons, we ask for a favorable report on SB0199.

Ande Kolp, Executive Director
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¹ <https://dnr.maryland.gov/publiclands/Pages/accessibleactivities.aspx?activity=AdaptiveRecreationEquipment>