SB721.DDCoalition.Support.pdf

Uploaded by: Ande Kolp

Position: FAV

MARYLAND DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES COALITION

Dedicated to the rights and quality of life for people with developmental disabilities in Maryland

Senate Finance Committee
March 3, 2026
SB721: Developmental Disabilities Administration – Services – Eligibility for Recently Relocated People (Ralph's Act)
Position: **Support**

The Maryland Developmental Disabilities Coalition (DD Coalition) is comprised of five statewide organizations that are committed to improving the opportunities and outcomes for Marylanders with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD). As such, the DD Coalition supports SB 721 (Ralph's Act) to ensure continuity of services for people with developmental disabilities who must relocate to Maryland following the death or loss of a primary caregiver.

WHAT does this legislation do?

- Requires that people who received home and community-based developmental disabilities services in another state for at least 10 years, and who are moving to Maryland to live with a family member after the death or loss of a parent or primary caregiver, be eligible for services from the Developmental Disabilities Administration (DDA).
- Requires the DDA to issue an eligibility decision within 30 days.
- If determined eligible, places the person on the DDA Waiting List in the Crisis Resolution Category.

WHY is this legislation important?

- The death or loss of a parent or primary caregiver is one of the most disruptive events in a person's life. For people with significant support needs, this loss can also mean the immediate loss of housing, daily supports, and stability.
- Sometimes the only other available caregiver is a sibling or other family member who lives in Maryland. Families should not have to step in to support for their loved one and face a long, uncertain process to see if their loved one may or may not get DDA services.
- These situations are rare, urgent, and often traumatic.
- A clear 30-day eligibility determination provides predictability and stability. Placement in the Crisis Resolution Category appropriately recognizes the urgency of these circumstances while maintaining the structure of Maryland's existing DDA Waiting List.

Ralph's Act reflects a compassionate and practical response to families facing extraordinary circumstances. It ensures that people who have long relied on home and community-based services in another state are not left without a pathway to support when they must relocate to Maryland due to the loss of a caregiver. For these reasons, the DD Coalition strongly supports SB 721.

The Arc Maryland

DRM Disability Rights Maryland

MACS Maryland Association of Community Services

Maryland Developmental Disabilities Council
CREATING CHANGE • IMPROVING LIVES

People On the Go Maryland

Contact: Rachel London, Executive Director, Maryland Developmental Disabilities Council;
Chair, DD Coalition: RLondon@md-council.org

SB0721 Developmental Disabilities Administration -

Uploaded by: Cecilia Plante

Position: FAV

MARYLAND
LEGISLATIVE
COALITION

TESTIMONY FOR SB0721 – Developmental Disabilities Administration – Services – Eligibility for Recently Relocated Individuals (Ralph's Act) – FAVORABLE

Bill Sponsor: Senator Waldstreicher
Committee: Senate Finance
Organization Submitting: Maryland Legislative Coalition
Person Submitting: Jessica Gorski, Executive Committee
Position: FAVORABLE

Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Jessica Gorski, and I am submitting this testimony in strong support of SB0721 on behalf of the Maryland Legislative Coalition. We are a statewide coalition of grassroots organizations representing more than 30,000 Marylanders across every legislative district. Our mission is to promote legislation that strengthens education, healthcare, public safety, environmental protection, and social justice—ensuring that every Marylander has access to the resources and opportunities needed to thrive.

SB0721 directly advances that mission by ensuring continuity of care for individuals with developmental disabilities who relocate to Maryland. The bill requires that individuals who were previously determined eligible for developmental disability services in another state remain eligible to continue receiving those services here. It also directs the Department to establish an expedited process—within 30 days—to determine whether an individual meets Maryland's criteria for services.

These provisions are both practical and urgently needed.

Families often relocate to Maryland for work, caregiving, or stability, and individuals with developmental disabilities cannot afford gaps in essential services. Without continuity, they face disruptions in daily supports, employment assistance, housing stability, and community integration. SB0721 prevents these harmful interruptions by ensuring that Maryland recognizes prior eligibility determinations and acts swiftly to confirm service access.

By requiring an expedited review process, the bill reduces administrative delays that can leave families without support for months. This is especially critical for individuals who rely on consistent, structured services to maintain health, independence, and quality of life. SB0721 also promotes fairness and transparency by ensuring that Maryland's developmental disability system is responsive to the needs of newly arrived residents.

SB0721 reflects a compassionate, equity-centered approach to disability services. Individuals with developmental disabilities and their families already navigate complex systems and significant daily challenges. Ensuring they do not lose access to essential services when they cross state lines affirms Maryland's commitment to dignity, inclusion, and community-based support.

SB0721 aligns squarely with the mission of the Maryland Legislative Coalition. It strengthens public health, supports families, and promotes equitable access to critical services across the state. By ensuring continuity of care for recently relocated individuals, this legislation reinforces Maryland's commitment to building a more inclusive and supportive community for all residents.

We urge the Committee to support this thoughtful, necessary, and family-centered legislation.

Thank you for your time and consideration. **We respectfully urge a FAVORABLE report on SB0721.**

Senate Bill 742 testimony.pdf

Uploaded by: David Wamsley

Position: FAV

Testimony in support of

Senate Bill 742, the (Maryland Protecting People with Disabilities Act)

The Hon. Pamela Beidle, chairperson, Antonio Hayes, Vice-Chair, and members of the Senate Finance Committee:

We are testifying today in support of Senate Bill 742.

I am David Wamsleym, the Executive Director of Emerge Inc., accompanied by my wife of 50 years, Patrice Wamsley, and the Deputy Executive Director of Emerge, Mr. Brent Jones. I have managed programs for people with developmental disabilities in the state of Maryland for 46 years. Mr. Brent Jones has worked for 30 years in this field. My wife worked as a case manager for people with disabilities for 20 years. Ten years in, she was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis and eventually had to retire. The last 30 years have been a journey for us personally. We provide services for people with disabilities, but we also live the challenges of people with disabilities and their caregivers every day. We are fortunate I can still provide the care Pat needs at home without asking for help from DDA, but we may need DDA services ourselves some day.

Maryland's Developmental Disability Administration services have a deserved reputation as one of the preeminent service delivery systems in the country. These services are at risk if we do not fix the current problems, which are as profound as anything we have seen.

Emerge Inc. provides services to over 300 individuals with disabilities for the Department of Health, DDA. Since 2024, 41 people at Emerge have had their funding stopped for a period of time ranging from one month to three years. Seven people's services have been resolved. The other 34 people currently have unresolved problems and Emerge is receiving no funding.

Emerge is celebrating 50 years of service to people with disabilities, and is committed to supporting people in the community for another 50 years in cooperation with the Department. We have continued to support all 34 unfunded individuals. How? We have done fundraising over the years to build a contingency fund, so that when problems arise, we can continue our work without harming the people we support. At the current time, we are owed $4,370,000 by DDA for unfunded services. We will use our reserves as long as we can, but we cannot sustain services without payment indefinitely. Of the 34 people I noted, 31 of those people have the most severe disabilities, are elderly, and/or have no family, and would die if they were on the street without services. What happens when our reserves are gone and we can no longer help these people?

The severity of the current problem cannot be overemphasized. Of the 34 people who currently are not receiving services, Emerge is the representative payee for all of these people except one. In this fiduciary arrangement, we receive notices of required information and benefits eligibility. Not one time have we received a written notice of denial of services which would allow us to appeal. The Department has simply disenrolled people from the waiver and or simply stopped payment without notice.

Since 2024, when this current crisis began, we have been working hard to partner with the Eligibility Determination Division of the Department. Our staff would call, or go in person to find out if EDD needed any documents, and we would hand documents to EDD to help resolve issues. We found the individual state employees at EDD to be most helpful, and would tell us if any documentation was needed and how to get it to them. The Department has now stopped our effort. The staff at EDD who process benefits are no longer allowed to talk to us on the phone or in person. We don't know what EDD needs, and they now won't tell us. While the Department may have a good reason for ceasing communication, it is simply compounding problems.

This bill, and the specificity in it, are absolutely needed to avoid a crisis of even greater proportions.

We respectfully ask the committee for a favorable vote on Senate Bill 742.

Thank you

David Wamsley

Patrice Wamsley

Brent Jones

Maryland Catholic Conference_FAV_SB721.pdf

Uploaded by: Diane Arias

Position: FAV

MARYLAND
CATHOLIC
CONFERENCE

March 3, 2026

Senate Bill 721
Developmental Disabilities Administration - Services - Eligibility for Recently Relocated Individuals (Ralph's Act)
Senate Finance Committee

Position: Favorable

The Maryland Catholic Conference (MCC) is the public policy representative of the three (arch)dioceses serving Maryland, which together encompass over one million Marylanders. Statewide, their parishes, schools, hospitals, and numerous charities combine to form our state's second largest social service provider network, behind only our state government.

Senate Bill 721 requires that certain individuals who were determined to be eligible to receive certain developmental disabilities services in another state be eligible to continue to receive those services in the State; requiring the Department to establish an expedited process to make a determination on whether an individual meets certain criteria to receive services within 30 days.

The bill requires the Department to establish an expedited eligibility process, with determinations completed within 30 days. If deemed eligible, the individual would be placed in the crisis resolution category and granted access to waiver services through the most appropriate reserve category, based on the services previously received. Importantly, the Department may make eligibility and priority determinations even before the individual formally establishes Maryland residency—allowing for continuity of care and minimizing service gaps.

The current redetermination process for essential disability services can be lengthy, complex, and administratively burdensome. Individuals who relocate often face significant delays before services are restored, even when they have long-standing eligibility in another state and no change in medical or functional need. Given that most states operate similar eligibility frameworks for home- and community-based services, it is reasonable to recognize prior eligibility as strong evidence of ongoing need.

Without an expedited pathway, individuals with significant disabilities may go weeks or months without critical supports—such as personal care assistance, behavioral health services, or residential supports—simply because they crossed state lines.[1] For families already navigating the loss or incapacitation of a caregiver, these delays can be devastating. Essential care should not be interrupted during a time of crisis. Additionally, many states—including Maryland—have lengthy waiting lists for disability services, sometimes stretching for years due to funding limitations.[2] The risk of losing access to services or being placed at the back of a waiting list can deter families from relocating, even when moving is necessary to care for a loved one or pursue employment opportunities. No family should have to choose between staying together and maintaining access to life-sustaining supports.

By creating an expedited and predictable transition process, this legislation would make Maryland more welcoming and attractive to families caring for individuals with disabilities. It ensures that vulnerable individuals are treated with dignity and that continuity of care is prioritized. Financial or bureaucratic barriers should not prevent access to essential services, nor should they diminish quality of life or place families at risk of financial hardship. Ultimately, this bill affirms that individuals with disabilities are valued members of our communities. It promotes stability, protects families during times of crisis, and reinforces Maryland's commitment to upholding the dignity and well-being of every person.

For these reasons, the Maryland Catholic Conference asks for a favorable report on **SB 721**.

Thank you for your consideration.

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[1] chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcglclefindmkaj/https://www.kennedykrieger.org/sites/default/files/library/documents/community/maryland-center-for-developmental-disabilities-mcdd/DDA%20-%20Waiting%20List.pdf

[2] chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcglclefindmkaj/https://pathfindersforautism.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/01/Moving-to-or-From-MD-with-Benefits-and-Disability-Services.pdf

SB721_RalphsAct_KennedyKrieger_Support.pdf

Uploaded by: Emily Arneson

Position: FAV

Kennedy Krieger

DATE: March 3, 2026 COMMITTEE: Senate Finance
BILL NO: Senate Bill 721
BILL TITLE: DDA - Services - Eligibility for Recently Relocated Individuals (Ralph's Act)
POSITION: Support

Kennedy Krieger Institute supports Senate Bill 721 - Developmental Disabilities Administration - Services - Eligibility for Recently Relocated Individuals (Ralph's Act).

Bill Summary:
This bill specifies that individuals who received home and community-based services, or similar services, in another state, must be eligible to receive those services from the Maryland Department of Health (MDH). MDH is responsible for establishing an expedited process to determine an individual's eligibility.

Background:
Kennedy Krieger provides specialized services to patients nationally and internationally. Kennedy Krieger Institute is dedicated to improving the lives of children and young adults with developmental, behavioral, cognitive and physical challenges. Kennedy Krieger's services include inpatient, outpatient, school-based and community-based programs.

The Maryland Center for Developmental Disabilities (MCDD) at Kennedy Krieger is proud to be Maryland's designated University Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities Education, Research, and Service (UCEDD) and a member of the national Association of University Centers on Disabilities (AUCD).

MCDD links the community to vital services, research and information to improve the lives of people with disabilities. Our mission is to provide leadership that advances the inclusion of people with intellectual, developmental and other disabilities through interdisciplinary preservice preparation, continuing education and training; research and evaluation; community service and technical assistance; and product development and information dissemination.

Rationale:
Allowing individuals who were previously eligible in another state to remain eligible upon moving to Maryland helps prevent service disruptions that can destabilize individuals and families during relocation. Ensuring immediate access to needed support minimizes interruptions in daily living, employment, and medical or therapeutic services, all of which are essential for maintaining independence and well-being. The expedited 30-day determination process further reduces delays that can lead to financial strain, caregiver burnout, and regression in critical skills. By honoring prior eligibility decisions and promoting timely evaluations, this policy supports continuity of care, equity, and smoother transitions for those relying on these essential services.

Kennedy Krieger requests a favorable report on Senate Bill 721.

Emily Arneson – AVP Government Affairs – arneson@kennedykrieger.org or 443-631-2188

SB721_MACS_FAVORABLE.pdf
Uploaded by: Gregory Snyder
Position: FAV

Maryland Association
of Community Services

Senate Finance Committee
SB 721 - Developmental Disabilities Administration – Services – Eligibility for Recently Relocated People (Ralph's Act)
Position: Favorable

The Maryland Association of Community Services (MACS) is a nonprofit association of over 125 agencies across Maryland serving people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD). MACS members provide residential, day and supported employment services to thousands of Marylanders so that they can live, work and fully participate in their communities. Our members partner with the Developmental Disabilities Administration (DDA) to deliver high-quality, community-based supports across the state.

MACS supports SB 721, which establishes a clear and timely eligibility process for people with developmental disabilities who must relocate to Maryland after the death or loss of a parent or primary caregiver. This legislation creates a narrow and compassionate pathway for people who have received home and community-based developmental disabilities services in another state for at least 10 years and are moving to Maryland to live with a family member.

Under SB 721, DDA would be required to issue an eligibility decision within 30 days of application in these circumstances. If determined eligible, the person would be placed on the DDA Waiting List in the Crisis Resolution Category, recognizing the urgent nature of the situation while maintaining the structure of Maryland's existing system.

Key Points

- **Timely Eligibility Decisions:** The death or loss of a primary caregiver is one of the most destabilizing events in a person's life. For people with significant support needs, this loss can also mean the immediate loss of housing, daily supports, and stability. A 30-day eligibility determination provides clarity and predictability during an already traumatic transition.
- **Support for Maryland Families**: In many cases, a sibling or other family member living in Maryland is the only available caregiver. Families who step forward in a time of crisis should not face prolonged uncertainty or administrative barriers when seeking to stabilize their loved one's supports.
- **Responsible System Alignment:** Placement in the Crisis Resolution Category appropriately acknowledges the urgency of these situations while preserving fairness and integrity within

Maryland's existing DDA Waiting List framework. The bill balances compassion with responsible system management.

- **Continuity and Stability**: People who have relied on long-term home and community-based services should not be left without a pathway to support solely because they must relocate after losing a caregiver. Ensuring continuity of services helps prevent unnecessary institutionalization, disruption, and hardship.

MACS members often work alongside families during periods of transition and crisis. Establishing a clear statutory framework for these rare but urgent circumstances strengthens the overall stability, transparency, and responsiveness of Maryland's developmental disabilities service system.

In conclusion, we respectfully urge the committee to issue a favorable report on SB 721.

Best regards,

Greg Snyder
Maryland Association of Community Services

2026 MOTA SB 721 Senate Side.pdf

Uploaded by: Michael Paddy
Position: FAV

MOTA
MARYLAND OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY ASSOCIATION

Maryland Occupational Therapy Association

PO Box 36401, Towson, Maryland 21286 ⧫ mota-members.com

Committee:	**Senate Finance Committee**
Bill Number:	**Senate Bill 721**
Title:	**Developmental Disabilities Administration - Services - Eligibility for Recently Relocated Individuals (Ralph's Act)**
Hearing Date:	**March 3, 2026**
Position:	**Support**

The Maryland Occupational Therapy Association (MOTA) supports Senate Bill 721 - Developmental Disabilities Administration - Services - Eligibility for Recently Relocated Individuals (Ralph's Act). This bill requires the Department of Health to grant expedited eligibility for developmental disability services to certain individuals who move to Maryland after their out-of-state caregiver dies or becomes incapacitated. It applies to dependents who received home- and community-based waiver services in another state for at least 10 years and are moving to live with a Maryland family member who has lived in the state for at least two years. The bill mandates a 30-day eligibility determination, places qualifying individuals in the crisis resolution category, and allows the state to begin reviewing eligibility before the person officially establishes Maryland residency.

Occupational therapy practitioners (OTPs) support this bill because it helps prevent gaps in services for individuals with developmental disabilities who rely on consistent supports to function safely and independently. When services are interrupted, especially after the death or incapacity of a caregiver, clients can lose critical daily living, mobility, communication, and community participation supports that OTPs help provide. By expediting eligibility and ensuring continuity of home- and community-based services, the bill promotes stability, functional independence, and better long-term outcomes which are core goals of occupational therapy practice.

We ask for a favorable report. If we can provide any further information, please contact Michael Paddy at mpaddy@policypartners.net.

3-3-2026 Favorable SB0721 DDA Moving.pdf

Uploaded by: Ronza Othman
Position: FAV

NATIONAL FEDERATION
OF THE BLIND
MARYLAND

Live the life you want.

From: Ronza Othman, President
National Federation of the Blind of Maryland
15 Charles Plaza, #3002
Baltimore, MD 21201 president@nfbmd.org

To: Senate Finance Committee

The members of the National Federation of the Blind of Maryland urge the Senate Finance Committee to give a favorable report to SB0721 - Developmental Disabilities Administration - Services - Eligibility for Recently Relocated Individuals (Ralph's Act).

Lack of continuity of services when moving across states plagues disabled people who are in need of them, and we feel this bill will help remedy this issue by ensuring developmentally-disabled people are eligible or the same services when transitioning between states, and by expediting the eligibility process. For example, if someone is eligible for in-home support in one state, and then must move to Maryland to live with a family member but cannot receive the same services, their transition to Maryland will be rough. In-home support can be the difference between independence and institutionalization, and we believe that all disabled people deserve the dignity associated with independence and independent choice. If a disabled person must rely on a relative or friend for in-home support and the friend/relative is unable to provide the support, this can create feelings of resentment, and even if not, will create a power dynamic between the disabled person in need of care, and the non-disabled person providing it. In some situations, the disabled person could be coerced into choosing to live in an institution and/or not moving to Maryland at all. We believe Maryland should be a welcoming environment that celebrates the diversity of the American identity, and this bill will help us get there.

For those reasons, we ask for a favorable report on SB0721. For questions, please contact me at President@nfbmd.org or at 443-426-4110.

3.3.26.SB721Ralph'sAct.Fellosigned.pdf

Uploaded by: Rylie Shewbridge
Position: FAV

March 3, 2026

Chair Pamela Beidle
Senate Finance Committee
3 East Miller Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

RE: SB721/HB1015 – Developmental Disabilities Administration - Services - Eligibility for Recently Relocated Individuals (Ralph's Act)

Dear Chair Beidle and Members of the Committee,

On behalf of Fello, we write in support of ***SB721/HB1015 – Developmental Disabilities Administration - Services - Eligibility for Recently Relocated Individuals (Ralph's Act).***

Across Maryland, Fello is building communities where people belong. With a team of more than 650 employees, Fello supports over 5,000 people with disabilities each year – creating opportunities that empower people to live the lives they choose. From advancing equity and respect to expanding access and connection, inclusion is at the heart of everything we do.

SB721/HB1015 would require the Developmental Disabilities Administration (DDA) to establish an expedited eligibility process for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities who move to Maryland from another state where they were already receiving services. The bill requires the DDA to issue an eligibility determination within 30 days for individuals who were receiving comparable home- and community-based supports and are relocating to live with an immediate family member who will now provide support. This ensures that eligibility decisions are not delayed due to relocation.

Families who move to Maryland often face duplicative paperwork, long wait times, and gaps in critical services. These interruptions can cause significant challenges and unnecessary health and safety risks. SB721/HB1015 promotes continuity of care and ensures Maryland remains welcoming to people with disabilities by providing a smoother, faster transition into essential services.

For these reasons, we respectfully urge a favorable report on SB721/HB1015.

Sincerely,

Jonathon Rondeau
President & CEO

SB 721.pdf
Uploaded by: Scott Evans
Position: FAV

BENEDICTINE
Learning for Living

Senate Bill 721 – Developmental Disabilities Administration – Services – Eligibility for Recently Relocated Individuals (Ralph's Act)

Senate Finance Committee
March 3, 2026

Good afternoon, my name is Scott Evans, and I am the CEO of The Benedictine School located in Ridgely in Caroline County. Benedictine is a nonpublic special education school and adult community service provider for children and adults with developmental disabilities. I am here today in support of SB 721, both as a professional in the field and as a friend of a family that is currently going through a situation similar to one described by Ralph's sister.

Last fall I was approached by a family I have known for the past 10 years to discuss a unique situation they are facing. Joe and Julie live and work in Queen Annes County and we met through our son's being on the same swim team. Joe's parents live in upstate New York where his brother receives services through a local community provider and is funded through a Medicaid waiver program in New York. Joe's father has been recently diagnosed with Dementia and has been in and out of the hospital and rehabilitation facilities. His mother has been supporting her husband's care while juggling caring for her son. This has also taken a toll on the mental and physical health of Joe's aging mom.

Joe asked me about support options in Maryland when it becomes apparent that his parents can no longer support his brother in New York. Joe would like to have his brother move to Maryland at that point where Joe can take over the role of primary advocate and supporter for his brother. Joe and his family are doing the right thing by planning now for what will be an emotional and difficult situation for their family sometime in the near future. SB 721 would ease the anxiety of this transition on Joe and his brother. SB 721 would give a pathway for a family like Joe's and ensure their loved one is properly supported through a difficult family transition.

As a professional in the field, I see the shift of primary advocate and care giver from parents to siblings often, and each year it is increasing. While each family dynamic is different, SB 721 would offer a family options on how best to support their loved one.

In closing, I respectfully ask for your support of SB 721 for MD families who are quietly working through the same issues as Joe and Ralph's family.

SB 0721_Hennes_Fav.pdf

Uploaded by: Stefanie Hennes
Position: FAV

SB 0721 Testimony - Ralph's Act
March - Finance Committee

Dear Committee Members,

Thank you for the opportunity to share my family's experience and support for SB 0721 - Ralph's Act. I am here because no Maryland family should have to endure what we have simply to secure services for a loved one with developmental disabilities. While MDH argues otherwise, nothing in this bill will compromise the integrity of DDA's waiting list, which already utilizes priority categories, and where the universe of people who may fall within the bill's provisions is exceedingly narrow. Nor will it subject MDH to legal risks around Medicaid eligibility because the bill does not mandate granting a Medicaid waiver – just the timely ability to apply for one. Finally, the bill advances the established policy of prioritizing continuity of services for individuals with disabilities.

Ralph had a long road to the Crisis Resolution priority category.

My brother, Ralph, is 41 years old. For most of his life, Ralph lived in Connecticut with our mother as his primary caregiver, attending appropriate educational and day habilitation programs. But, in November 2023, our mother died unexpectedly. At the same time, our father began experiencing serious medical issues that led to a car accident he did not remember causing. Overnight, Ralph lost his lifelong caregiver and was left in the care of an elderly father with cardiac and neurological problems, severe hearing loss, and declining health.

As I grieved my mother and managed my father's health crisis, I prepared to apply for Maryland DDA services so Ralph could safely transition to live with me in Maryland – the state I have called home since 2008. What followed was more than a year and a half of delay, shifting explanations, and moving goalposts.

I gathered decades-old psychological reports, documented why school records no longer existed, obtained updated evaluations, submitted medical documentation showing my father was no longer capable of safely caring for Ralph. On the application, I cited the regulation establishing Ralph's Maryland residency through me, his guardian, and proof of my Maryland residence.

But, after filing the application, I heard nothing for three months. When I followed up, I was told Ralph had to be a Maryland resident to qualify, despite the regulation I cited. Only after legal intervention did the eligibility interview proceed.

The interviewer recommended placement in the Crisis Resolution category due to the risks posed by Ralph's caregiver's health. Yet DDA placed him in "Current Request," a category that never leads to receiving services if the applicant is not transitioning from school.

From there, the process became more troubling. Despite extensive documentation of my father's inability to care for Ralph, including physician letters and evidence of hospitalization, DDA stated that Crisis Resolution could not apply because the caregiver in crisis lived in Connecticut. Yet the governing regulation states that Crisis Resolution applies when an applicant is "living with a caregiver who is unable to provide adequate care due to the caregiver's impaired health." It does not limit that caregiver to Maryland.

Over the next year, I submitted multiple Priority Category Assessments (PCAs), with physician letters, day program reports documenting Ralph's self-injurious and dangerous behaviors, videos of escalating episodes, and proof that I cannot telework or provide full-time daytime supervision due to my employment. It was never enough. At one point, I was asked whether Ralph had already been harmed in a car accident caused by my father's unsafe driving. Apparently, imminent risk was not sufficient.

Throughout this process, I sought help from elected officials, who facilitated meetings with DDA representatives. I was told I did not need to move Ralph to obtain the crisis resolution priority category. Later, I was told I should submit a new PCA after he moved. Meanwhile, my father was hospitalized twice for cardiac-related emergencies. Each time, I traveled to Connecticut to care for Ralph.

Ultimately, after my father's repeated hospitalizations, filing a Medicaid appeal, and retaining counsel, I moved Ralph to Maryland without services in place. Only then did DDA finally place him in Crisis Resolution.

Ralph is here now and my husband and I are taking leave from work to supervise him. We are relying on friends for help. But this instability could have been avoided. If Ralph had been appropriately placed in Crisis Resolution when the evidence first demonstrated it was warranted, I could have minimized his time without day programming. I could have developed a person-centered plan and secured a provider before relocating him. Instead, we were forced to choose between leaving Ralph in an unsafe situation or chaotically moving him into another uncertain and unstable one.

I recognize that DDA serves many families, some with extreme needs, and that so many are still awaiting services. I am thankful that Ralph is on the path to obtaining services. But attorneys, elected officials, appeals, and a physical relocation into an unstable situation should not be prerequisites for receiving services. The current system creates a perverse incentive to let something awful happen to a loved one in order to secure services for him.

MDH's concerns about this bill are unconvincing.

I am aware of certain concerns that MDH has raised about this bill, but none of them are warranted. Their concerns about people "skipping the line" are unfounded for three reasons. First, the decision to move a loved one away from the life they have always known is not one that any caregiver - including myself - takes lightly. I repeatedly cried when making this decision. The notion that a family with a loved one who is already receiving services elsewhere would orchestrate a complex scheme to move a caregiver to MD for two years, leaving the applicant behind in another state, in anticipation of some other caregiver's death or incapacitation is beyond far-fetched. Merely writing those words shows how absurd MDH's argument is.

Second, this bill furthers Maryland's already-existing public policy prioritizing continuity of services. For example, youth transitioning from school "are prioritized regardless of the severity of their situation and their relative need for immediate services." As the MD Developmental Disabilities Council has explained, this priority ensures that those "with significant disabilities do not regress after completing their special education schooling" because they "typically stayed at home with nothing to do, losing skills invested through the educational system." So, too, here. Ralph has been without day programming for over two months and his behavior is declining. He stays up through the night and becomes overstimulated and agitated, awakening my children. Someone, like Ralph, who has been receiving services in another state for decades and has to relocate due to a caregiver loss should not be forced to languish for years in a Maryland basement, deteriorating and losing valuable skills.

Finally, MDH built "skipping the line" into the regulatory framework. The crisis resolution category already exists, which by definition allows certain applicants to be prioritized over others who have been waiting longer. In fact, one of the existing bases for the crisis resolution priority category is when the applicant is "Living with a caregiver who is unable to provide adequate care due to the caregiver's impaired health, which may place the applicant at risk of serious physical harm." This bill is not a shocking departure from current practice. It simply codifies another narrow basis for crisis resolution status, building on existing priority categories. There's nothing inherently unfair about that.

As to MDH's purported legal risk of running afoul of the Medicaid rules, the process for receiving DDA services involves multiple steps and this bill would not interrupt the Medicaid eligibility process. The first step is eligibility for DDA services. This has nothing to do with Medicaid. It is based on the individual's disability and need for care. Then there's the priority category placement. Again, that has nothing to do with Medicaid. Finally, once a waiver becomes available, only then does an applicant develop a person-centered plan, which, along with Maryland residency, are two of the technical eligibility requirements for the waiver. As long as an applicant has moved to Maryland and is not receiving waivered services elsewhere at that point, there should be no issue in processing that application.

Nothing in this bill requires MD to accept someone's eligibility for waivered services in another state as dispositive proof of waiver eligibility in Maryland. Instead, that bill requirement is used to *narrow* the universe of people who may fit into its new crisis resolution criteria. After placement in crisis resolution, all rules for Medicaid eligibility would apply and if the applicant cannot meet those, he would not receive the waiver.

Long-term Maryland residents like myself have lost faith in the support systems that should be there for us when needed. MDH and DDA are broken. Instead of providing a system of approving benefits, they look for reasons to delay and deny services. This is evident in many ways, not the least of which is the hundreds of individuals pursuing a class action lawsuit over arbitrary removal from their waivered services.

In a perfect world, people with disabilities would have the same ability to move between states that other individuals do. Unfortunately, the patchwork Medicaid system does not uniformly allow that. Bigger changes are necessary. But this bill leaves comprehensive reform for another day. Instead, it offers a narrow path to service continuity for a very limited segment of the population who are left without a caregiver in their prior state and therefore relocate to Maryland to be with a suitable, long-term Maryland resident caregiver. That is manifestly in keeping with the existing regulatory framework, Medicaid rules, and already-acknowledged public policy priorities.

Thank you for your time,
Stefanie Hennes

I'm really Sad because I
have no new Program but
tell me when I new Program
starts soon as possible Ralph
see PCP RenOXX caregivers
yeah ok we will are on next
mouth out because I'm waiting
thank you

SB 0721_Hougham_Fav.pdf

Uploaded by: Victoria Hougham

Position: FAV

Written Testimony in Support of SB 0721 — Ralph's Act

Senate Finance Committee
February 2026

Dear Committee Members,

My name is Victoria Hougham, and I am a licensed clinical social worker. I am submitting this testimony in strong support of SB 0721, Ralph's Act. I am here as both a professional who understands the toll of family caregiving systems, and as someone who has witnessed this legislation's namesake and his family navigate the very gaps this bill seeks to close.

Over the past several months, I have taken time away from my own work to help Ralph's sister and her husband care for him while they await the day programming and services he needs. I have seen firsthand what it looks like when a family does everything right–gathers documentation, engages attorneys, contacts elected officials, files appeals–and still cannot get the state to act until something truly catastrophic has already occurred. The toll on Ralph's sister, her husband, her children, and those of us in their support network has been enormous.

As a clinical social worker, I am trained to assess family systems under stress. Over the last few years I have witnessed a capable, resourceful family being worn down by a system that, as currently designed, creates a perverse incentive: wait for something awful to happen before providing help. The family was told, in various ways, that the crisis was not yet severe enough, even as Ralph's elderly father was hospitalized twice for cardiac emergencies and Ralph himself was left without a safe, capable caregiver.

I also bring a more personal perspective. I have a brother with a disability who lived in a group home in Massachusetts. For years, I thought about the future–about what would happen as our family aged, about whether I might one day soon need to bring him to Maryland to be closer to me. Watching Ralph's family go through this process made me think carefully about what that transition would look like, and whether Maryland's system would be navigable for us. My brother passed away in January, and that question is no longer one I have to answer. But many Maryland families are asking it right now, quietly planning for a future where they become the primary caregiver for a sibling or loved one with a disability. They deserve a clear and workable path.

Beyond the human cost, there is a compelling case for the state to pass this legislation. Early, planned transitions are substantially less expensive than crisis responses. When families are forced to wait until a situation becomes catastrophic, the state often ends up funding emergency placements, intensive behavioral interventions, and acute care that could have been avoided with timely services. In Ralph's case, months of delay without day programming have contributed to behavioral deterioration–the very thing that proactive services are designed to prevent.

There is also a workforce cost. Ralph's sister, her husband, and friends like me have taken leave from our jobs to fill the gap left by the absence of services. That is lost productivity–real economic impact–that ripples outward from every family left without support. Maryland benefits when caregivers can remain stably employed, and when families can plan transitions in an orderly way rather than responding to emergencies.

SB 0721 addresses a specific, identifiable gap: it protects long-term Maryland residents who are prepared to welcome a family member with disabilities from out of state, when that person's current caregiver can no longer safely provide care. It is a targeted, commonsense fix that prevents families from having to choose between leaving a loved one in an unsafe situation and moving them into chaos. It recognizes that Maryland residents who have deep roots here–who pay taxes, raise families, and contribute to their communities–should be able to plan responsibly for their loved ones without the system working against them.

I respectfully urge this Committee to pass SB 0721 The families who need this protection are not asking for special treatment. They are asking for a system that allows them to do the right thing without being penalized for it.

Respectfully submitted,

Victoria Hougham, MSW, LICSW

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Uploaded by: Virginia Crespo
Position: FAV

Senate Bill 721
Developmental Disabilities Administration – Services – Eligibility for Recently Relocated Individuals (Ralph’s Act)
In Support of
Finance Committee
Hearing: March 3, 2026

Dear Honorable Senator Pamela Beidle, Chair, Senator Hayes, Vice-Chair, and distinguished committee members,

On a very personal and individual level, I would like to request your support for SB 721. My daughter, Sarah, suffered a fall14 months ago that resulted in a traumatic brain injury. After 70 days in Bellevue Hospital in New York City, she returned to her home in Brooklyn, New York. She has recovered much of her cognitive and physical abilities, but her right arm and leg (dominant side) do not yet work well enough to support her. She needs help for most functions. Sarah’s partner has been her primary caregiver during this time. This has become untenable. He works 60+ hours a week. Sarah must be home alone during this time. Health aides are sometimes available, but they are sporadic and unreliable. This has made it very difficult to get to physical therapy as well as keep appointments with her Neurologist and primary care doctor.

Together, we decided to bring Sarah to Maryland to stay with me in my home. I am retired and can get her to these necessary appointments. Sarah is receiving SSDI and her primary insurance is Medicaid New York. This is not transferrable to Medicaid Maryland. Since Sarah is on SSDI she would be eligible for Medicaid Maryland, but only after six months to establish Maryland residency. Right now, we are using private pay to get Physical Therapy. The doctor’s appointments will have to wait.

It is not clear to me whether or not SB 721 would help Sarah, but it is certainly a step in the right direction. Please support SB 721.

Sincerely,
Virginia G. Crespo
410 Francis Court
Millersville, Maryland 21108
410-598-3145

SB 721 - FIN - MDH - LOC (1).pdf

Uploaded by: Meghan Lynch

Position: UNF

Maryland
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

Wes Moore, Governor · Aruna Miller, Lt. Governor · Meena Seshamani, M.D., Ph.D., Secretary

March 3, 2026

The Honorable Pamela Beidle
Chair, Senate Finance Committee
3 East Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401-1991

RE: Senate Bill 721 – Developmental Disabilities Administration - Services - Eligibility for Recently Relocated Individuals (Ralph's Act) – Letter of Concern

Dear Chair Bagnall and Committee Members:

The Maryland Department of Health (the Department) respectfully submits this letter of concern for Senate Bill (SB) 721 – Developmental Disabilities Administration - Services - Eligibility for Recently Relocated Individuals (Ralph's Act). SB 721 establishes new eligibility criteria for services from the Department and the Developmental Disabilities Administration (DDA) through the DDA-operated Medicaid Home and Community-Based Services waiver program. It also requires the Department to establish an expedited process to determine eligibility under the new eligibility criteria.

SB 721 presents significant legal and fiscal challenges that could jeopardize Maryland's federal funding and existing service delivery:

1. **Federal Compliance and Legal Risks**

   Medicaid Home and Community-Based Services waiver programs are state-specific.[1] There is no federal legal mechanism for portability among states; instead, each state must apply for its own waiver authority and assure the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) that it will strictly follow its own approved eligibility requirements.[2] However, SB 721, particularly as proposed § 7-404.2(A), mandates that Maryland accept another state's eligibility determination as presumptive eligibility for Maryland's waive program eligibility in certain circumstances, even if the other state's criteria conflict with Maryland requirements. This is not compliant with federal Medicaid eligibility requirements and the Department would be unable to implement this bill without being in violation of federal law and requirements.

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[1] 42 U.S.C. § 1396n; 42 C.F.R. § 441.301.

[2] 42 CFR § 441.302.

Requiring Maryland to accept another state's eligibility determination without independently verifying compliance with Maryland's federally-approved authority would undermine Medicaid program integrity, including the State's responsibility to ensure that all individuals receiving services meet CMS-approved financial, medical, and technical eligibility standards and that federal funds are claimed appropriately. If another state's criteria are different than or in conflict with standards than Maryland's, Maryland could be found in violation of its own federal waiver authority. The failure to conform to its waiver would make the Department ineligible for federal financial participation from CMS for the services provided to such individuals.[3]

2. Internal Inconsistency and Implementation Hurdles

The bill contains a procedural inconsistency. Proposed § 7-404.2(D) allows DDA to determine eligibility before a move, while § 7-404.2(A)(1)(iii) requires the applicant to have already moved to Maryland to live with an immediate family member in order to be eligible. It is unclear how the Department would provide a pre-move determination for a person whose eligibility is legally contingent on relocation.

3. Fiscal and Budgetary Impact

Complying with SB 721 would require the Department to circumvent federal funding entirely in cases of eligibility conflict. Maryland would likely have to use 100% State funds to support these individuals until it was determined if they met Maryland-specific criteria. It is unclear at this time the length of time that the Department would be required to use state general funds to cover these services.

In addition to the legal and fiscal challenges outlined above, the Department is concerned that this bill would unjustly displace approximately 4,000 Marylanders with intellectual and developmental disabilities already waiting for DDA services. Because SB 721 requires entry into a waiver for those eligible under this act, it places the Department in a compromising situation, as the Department would compromise the integrity of its waitlist requirements and compromise the integrity of its Medicaid waiver authority and Medicaid eligibility regulations – specifically, COMAR 10.09.24. DDA would either prioritize them over current residents for existing waiver slots or expand expenditures to include additional waiver slots, the latter of which is not feasible given current statutory requirements for utilization of State funds if and when available.

To facilitate this prioritization, SB 721 mandates that individuals eligible through this pathway be automatically placed in the Crisis Resolution priority category, regardless of whether they meet the normal criteria for Crisis Resolution. Creating an expedited pathway for out-of-state individuals would effectively allow people to receive preferential treatment above native Marylanders or longtime Maryland residents who have been waiting numerous years, depending on their circumstances, to be afforded an opportunity to apply for Community Pathways waiver program services simply by relocating. It would undermine long-standing prioritization criteria (e.g., crisis, institutional transitions, court-ordered releases) and violate principles of equity and access to services for Maryland residents who have intellectual and developmental disabilities. It

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[3] *See* 42 C.F.R. § 430.35; 42 C.F.R. § 430.42.

could also have the unintended consequence of incentivizing people from neighboring states and localities, such as Delaware, West Virginia, Pennsylvania, Virginia, and the District of Columbia, to relocate to Maryland to take advantage of our relatively richer package of home and community-based services.

The Department appreciates the Committee’s consideration of these concerns. If you would like to discuss this further, please do not hesitate to contact Meghan Lynch, Director of Governmental Affairs at meghan.lynch@maryland.gov.

Sincerely,

Meena Seshamani, M.D., Ph.D
Secretary of Health