



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: House Health Committee

The members of the National Federation of the Blind of Maryland urge the House Health Committee to give a favorable report to HB1015 - 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 for 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 HB1015. For questions, please contact me at President@nfbmd.org or at 443-426-4110.