



House Bill 202: Public Health - Social Isolation and Loneliness Pilot Grant Program - Establishment

Position: Support with Amendment

Dear Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Committee:

On behalf of Spectrum Support, a non-profit agency that helps people with developmental disabilities to live, learn, work and engage in social activities within their communities, I write to express our strong support for House Bill 202, the Social Isolation and Loneliness Pilot Grant Program.

Social isolation and loneliness have well-documented adverse effects on both mental and physical health, particularly among individuals who lack strong community connections. The pilot grant program envisioned by HB 202 will not only provide critical support to community organizations but will also produce valuable data to inform future statewide policy and programming aimed at reducing isolation and its associated health burdens.

Spectrum Support would respectfully request that the bill include "*individuals with disabilities*" to the list of populations that the Program shall prioritize when awarding grants. This addition will help ensure that Maryland's public health resources reach a group that experiences disproportionate levels of social isolation due to physical, sensory, cognitive, and communication barriers that limit access to community engagement, services, and supports.

We appreciate the sponsor's leadership on this issue and respectfully urge the Committee to report HB 202 favorably with the proposed amendment. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Cindy Freeman".

Cindy Freeman
Executive Director
Spectrum-support.org