

Testimony in Support of HB 1593 / SB 0583

Developmental Disabilities Administration – Self-Directed Services Manual – Public Comment

POSITION: FAVORABLE

Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Committee:

My name is **Kimberlie Manns**, and I am submitting this testimony in strong support of **HB 1593**, cross-filed with **SB 0583**, which requires the Deputy Secretary for Developmental Disabilities to provide public notice and allow **at least 90 days** for individuals, families, and stakeholders to review, understand, and comment on proposed changes to the Self-Directed Services Manual.

This bill is simple, reasonable, and urgently needed. It ensures that the people most affected by changes to self-directed services **individuals with developmental disabilities, their families, and the employers of record who support them have the time and accommodation necessary to meaningfully participate in the process.**

Why a 90-Day Review Period Is Essential

1. Individuals with developmental disabilities have a legal right to reasonable accommodation under the ADA.

Processing complex information, evaluating risks, and understanding policy changes often requires **extended time, repetition, and supported decision-making**. A 90-day review period is not excessive it is an accommodation that aligns with federal disability rights law and ensures equitable access to the policymaking process.

2. Sudden or poorly communicated changes can create unsafe and harmful situations.

Self-directed services involve **hiring, training, supervising, and managing staff**, often with limited backup options. Abrupt changes to rules, budgets, or procedures can destabilize care, interrupt essential supports, and place individuals at risk of:

- Loss of staffing
- Gaps in health and safety oversight

- Financial mismanagement through no fault of the participant
- Emotional distress and confusion
- Increased caregiver burden

A 90-day review period prevents avoidable crises.

3. The people at the center of these services are vulnerable, loving, human beings no different from any of us.

Behind every policy change is a real person whose daily life depends on stability, clarity, and respect. Many individuals in self-direction are employers of record themselves. They carry legal responsibilities that require time to understand and implement correctly.

They deserve the same dignity, predictability, and transparency that any employer or citizen would expect.

What HB 1593 / SB 0583 Actually Does

According to the Maryland General Assembly's bill synopsis, the legislation:

- **Requires public notice** before DDA makes changes to the Self-Directed Services Manual.
- **Requires DDA to receive and consider public comments for at least 90 days** after notice is provided.
- **Prohibits DDA from adopting changes until the full comment period has ended.**

This is not a barrier to progress it is a safeguard for transparency, accountability, and disability rights.

Conclusion

HB 1593 / SB 0583 honors the spirit of self-direction: **choice, control, and respect for the individual.**

It ensures that people with developmental disabilities, their families, and their support networks have the time and accommodations necessary to understand and respond to changes that directly affect their lives.

I respectfully urge the Committee to issue a **FAVORABLE** report.

Thank you for your consideration.

Short Oral Testimony Script (90 seconds)

POSITION: FAVORABLE — HB 1593 / SB 0583

Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify.

My name is **Kimberlie Manns**, and I strongly support **HB 1593 / SB 0583**, which requires a **minimum 90-day public comment period** before the Developmental Disabilities Administration makes changes to the Self-Directed Services Manual.

This bill is not about slowing progress. It is about **protecting people**.

Individuals with developmental disabilities and respecting their position as the employers of record who are also expected to track and monitor/process complex information, evaluate risks, and make decisions that directly affect their health, safety, and daily lives. Under the **ADA**, they are entitled to reasonable accommodations, including **extended time to understand and respond** to policy changes.

When changes are rushed or unclear, the consequences are real:

- Loss of staff
- Disrupted care
- Financial errors
- Emotional distress
- Unsafe situations that could have been prevented

A **90-day review period** is a simple safeguard. It ensures transparency, stability, and dignity. It gives people the time they need to comprehend changes with support they need to raise concerns before harm occurs.

These are vulnerable, loving human beings no different from any of us who deserve predictability and respect in the systems meant to support them.

I respectfully urge a **FAVORABLE** report on HB 1593 / SB 0583.

Thank you.

Legislator-Ready Visual Infographic (Text-Only Layout)

(You can paste this into Canva, PowerPoint, or a one-page PDF. I can also generate a styled version if you want.)

HB 1593 / SB 0583 — Why a 90-Day Review Period Matters

Developmental Disabilities Administration – Self-Directed Services Manual – Public Comment

What the Bill Does

- Requires **public notice** before DDA changes the Self-Directed Services Manual
- Requires **at least 90 days** for public comment
- Prohibits adoption of changes **until the full comment period ends**
- Ensures transparency, accountability, and ADA-aligned access

Why 90 Days? (ADA Accommodation)

Individuals with developmental disabilities often need:

- More time to **process complex information**
- **Repetition and support** to understand changes
- Time to **evaluate risks** and ask questions
- Assistance from supporters, families, and providers

A 90-day period is a **reasonable accommodation**, not a delay.

Risks of Rushed Changes

Without adequate review time, individuals face:

- Loss of essential staff
- Disrupted care routines
- Financial or administrative errors
- Confusion and emotional distress

- Increased safety risks

Preventable harm happens when changes move too fast.

Who Is Affected?

- Individuals with developmental disabilities
- Employers of record
- Families and support teams
- Direct Support Professionals
- Providers and community partners

These are **vulnerable, loving human beings** who rely on stable, predictable systems.

Why Legislators Should Support This Bill

- Strengthens compliance and reduces errors
- Builds trust between DDA and the community
- Ensures lived experience informs policy
- Protects health, safety, and autonomy
- Aligns Maryland with disability rights best practices

Bottom Line

A 90-day review period is a safeguard not a slowdown.

It ensures that changes are understood, safe, and equitable before implementation.