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Appropriations Committee

*Subcommittees*

Capital Budget

Education and Economic Development

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*The Maryland House of Delegates*  
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

**Testimony in Support of HB 851**

Human Services – Maryland Statewide Independent Living Council-Legal Status

Testimony of Delegate Cathi Forbes

Ways & Means

February 19, 2026

***What this bill does***

This bill will enable the [Maryland Statewide Independent Living Council](#) (Maryland SILC) to form as a non-profit and have autonomy over the Federal monies that fund them.

***History on the issue***

Federal legislation, adopted in 1992 requires each state to maintain a Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC).

The Maryland SILC was created by Executive Order on September 24, 1993.

The Maryland SILC is committed to enhancing freedom and independent decision making of individuals with disabilities.

Currently the Division of Rehabilitative Services (DORS), a division of MSDE, is the Designated State Entity (DSE) that receives and disburses the Federal funding received to the SILC and Centers for Independent Living (CILs). Because the Maryland SILC is not a free-standing entity, it cannot receive and expend funds or hire its own employees. It must use DORS to expend funds and to hire personnel to accomplish its work.

Legislation passed during the 2023 session, [HB 53/SB 608](#) was meant to make this change, and passed unanimously in the House and Senate. Unfortunately, as Maryland SILC attempted to effectuate the change, it found it needs this technical corrective legislation passed to finally realize its goal of becoming a non-profit.

### ***Why this bill matters***

The vision for Maryland SILC is for people with disabilities to have information, choices and control over the services and supports in their lives so they can participate fully in all aspects of society. This bill allows the people doing the work in our SILC and CILs more autonomy over the funding. This change will also enable them to apply for grants that may increase funding and allow them to do more work.

The restructuring of the organization will allow them to be more effective and contribute meaningfully to the goals of advancing independence and inclusion, by allowing them to have control of their finances.

Each state is required by Federal law to have a SILC, nearly half of the SILCs across the country have changed their structure and now operate as independent non-profits.

### ***Why you should vote for this bill***

The concept of this bill has already passed the House and Senate unanimously. This bill is a technical correction required to ensure Maryland SILC can finally become a non-profit. The majority of the members of the Maryland SILC are people living with disabilities. Other SILCs across the country have made this change for the better of their programs.

I ask for a favorable report. Thank you.