



WRITTEN TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HOUSE BILL 0851

Position: Favorable

To: The Honorable Vanessa Atterbeary, Chair, and Members of the Ways and Means Committee

From: Lorna-Mae Silcott, Executive Director, Maryland Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC)

Introduction

Good afternoon, Chair Atterbeary and members of the Ways and Means Committee. My name is Lorna-Mae Silcott, and I am the Executive Director of the Maryland Statewide Independent Living Council, commonly known as SILC. I am submitting this testimony to urge a favorable report on **House Bill 851**.

Context and Mission

SILC was established by Executive Order in 1993 and is mandated by the federal Rehabilitation Act. Our mission is to ensure that Marylanders with disabilities have the resources, advocacy, and community support necessary to live independently. While we are an instrumentality of the State, our daily operations require a level of administrative flexibility that allows us to work alongside our Centers for Independent Living (CILs) to monitor and implement the State Plan for Independent Living.

The Problem: Legal Ambiguity

Currently, our legal status in the Maryland Code contains a point of ambiguity. While we function as a nonprofit entity to meet federal requirements, the lack of explicit language defining SILC as a "tax-exempt body politic and corporate" creates unnecessary administrative hurdles. This ambiguity can complicate our ability to enter contracts, manage independent audits, and secure the insurance and financial standing necessary to operate efficiently.

The Solution: HB 0851

House Bill 851 provides a straightforward, technical clarification. By defining SILC as a tax-exempt body politic and corporate, this bill aligns our state legal status with our federal mandate and our practical operational needs.

This is not a change in our mission or our relationship with the State; rather, it provides the legal certainty required for us to be more agile, fiscally responsible, and effective in our service to the disability community.

Conclusion

This bill ensures that SILC can focus less on administrative gray areas and more on its core mission: advancing the independence and rights of Marylanders with disabilities. We thank the sponsors for their leadership on this technical but vital issue.

I respectfully ask the committee for a **favorable report** on HB 0851. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully submitted,

Lorna-Mae Silcott, Executive Director

Maryland Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC)
