



BILL: HB 851

POSITION: FAV – Favorable

COMMITTEE: Ways and Means

DATE: February 17, 2026

SUBMITTED BY: Maryland Department of Disabilities
217 East Redwood Street, Suite 1300, Baltimore, MD 21202

Dear Chair Wilkins,

The Maryland Department of Disabilities is pleased to provide this letter of support for **HB 851, Human Services - Maryland Statewide Independent Living Council - Legal Status**. This bill adds language clarifying, essentially, that the Maryland Statewide Independent Living Council (MSILC) is a tax-exempt and independent entity.

HB 851 corrects an oversight from Acts 2023, Ch. 43, which codified the MSILC into state law. At the time it was signed, it was believed that Ch. 43 granted the MSILC status as a fully independent, tax-exempt entity. However, it has since been determined that additional language was needed. HB 851 adds this language and satisfies the earlier intent of Ch. 43.

HB 851 also aligns with federal regulations governing entities such as the MSILC. The MSILC is part of a network of Statewide Independent Living Councils. These councils receive federal funding required by Title VII of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. Federal regulations at 45 C.F.R. § 1329.14(b) require statewide independent living councils to be independent from their “Designated State Entity” (which is responsible for receiving and disbursing their federal funds) and all other State agencies. The language proposed in HB 851 ensures that the MSILC’s federally required independence and autonomy is maintained.

In Maryland, the Designated State Entity is Maryland State Department of Education’s Division of Rehabilitation Services. Although MDOD does not have a formal relationship with the MSILC, we work collaboratively with the MSILC and consider them a valuable partner. We are happy to support the MSILC’s efforts to clarify its status in Maryland state law.

For these reasons, we respectfully request a **favorable report for HB 851**.

Sincerely,

Carol A. Beatty

Carol A. Beatty
Secretary, Department of Disabilities

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