



MARYLAND DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES COALITION

Dedicated to the rights and quality of life for people with developmental disabilities in Maryland

Health and Government Operations Committee

February 26, 2020

HB 847: State Coordinator for Autism Strategy and Advisory Stakeholder Group on Autism - Related Needs Letter of Information



8601 Robert Fulton Dr
Suite 140
Columbia, MD 21046



1500 Union Avenue
Suite 2000
Baltimore, MD 21211



8835 Columbia 100 Pky
Suite P
Columbia, MD 21044



**Maryland Developmental
Disabilities Council**

217 E Redwood Street
Suite 1300
Baltimore, MD 21202



7000 Tudsbury Road
Windsor Mill, MD
21244

The Maryland Developmental Disabilities Coalition is comprised of five statewide organizations that are committed to improving the opportunities and outcomes for Marylanders with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD).

All people with disabilities deserve to receive the supports they need in order to live, learn, work and thrive in communities of their choice. Barriers to education, employment, healthcare, housing, personal safety and other community supports are obstacles faced by the cross-disability community. The need is great:

- An estimated 21.5% of all people in Maryland have a disability, yet 42.6% of people in Maryland between 21 and 64 are unemployed;
- 21.5% of Marylanders with a disability live below the poverty line; *(the statistics above are from [Cornel Univeristy: Statistics on Disability](#) and refer to the population of people who are non-institutionalized)*
- Maryland's public and independent four-year institutions report that 6,662 students were registered as students with disabilities (2017 Maryland Higher Ed Report)
- There are an estimated 500 people who receive residential, employment, and other supports from the Developmental Disabilities Administration who are diagnosed with Autism, many with co-occurring disabilities.
- The CDC reports that roughly 10.5% have a mobility disability.

To respond to the many barriers faced by people with disabilities, the Maryland Department of Disabilities (MDOD) is charged with "coordinating and improving the delivery of services to individuals with disabilities in the state of Maryland." Towards this end, MDOD produces a [statewide disabilities plan](#) every 4 years, in consultation with the [Maryland Commission on Disabilities](#), to identify barriers to housing, employment, healthcare, transitioning youth, community living, transportation, etc., for all Marylanders with disabilities.

The needs of people with Autism and their families are important to this body. The MGA previously authorized the formation of a commission to consider the needs of people with Autism when the MGA passed [SB 963](#) in 2009 and created the [Maryland Commission on Autism](#) ("the Commission"). The Commission had a membership and charge substantially similar to the bill before you today, and produced a report in 2012, [Addressing the Needs of Individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorders in Maryland](#), which is readily available online.

Its key findings include recommendations for a statewide system of care, specifically to:

- Evaluate ways to promote Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) awareness
- Review the findings of any summit or conference regarding ASD
- Determine the need for the creation of services in designated areas of the state
- Develop recommendations for expanding services in conjunction with hospitals
- Develop recommendations to address the transition of children aging out of the autism waiver
- Develop a recommendation for enlisting universities and colleges in workforce development
- Evaluate programs that exist in other states to determine benefit to individuals in Maryland
- Develop recommendations for facilitating the coordination of research opportunities

Additionally, the Division of Rehabilitation Services offers specialized employment services for people with Autism, the [Autism Program Planning Success for Employment \(APAS\)](#).

We have recommendations from the Commission report for improving access to needed services and outcomes for individuals with ASD and their families that should be employed to increase responsiveness to the needs of people with ASD. We also have existing structures for disability services in the state that could and should be enhanced to deliver services and supports needed not only by people with ASD but by all people with disabilities.

The DD Coalition believes strongly that all Marylanders with disabilities deserve the improved life outcomes that accompany additional resources and the identification and elimination of barriers to community inclusion.

Respectfully Submitted.