

House Ways and Means Committee  
*HB 806: - Income Tax- Personal Exemption-Disabled Individuals*  
February 21, 2020  
Support



I'm happy to be standing with The Arc Maryland today as part of the largest advocacy organization in the state that's dedicated to the rights and quality of life of children and adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities and their families -- families like mine.

Most oldest son, Sammy, is autistic and has epilepsy. Sometimes he has several grand mal seizures a month, even with medication. You can imagine the challenges, but the successes are even sweeter.

We support House Bill 806, as it expands eligibility to a larger number of disabled adults so they can deduct an additional \$1000 from their Maryland income tax, if the individual has a permanent physical disability, including blindness.

It's already been established under current tax law for some time now that a person who has blindness has the option of an additional personal deduction in this amount.

It only makes sense that other permanent physical disabilities be considered eligible for this option.

My son will not have a traditional arc of life and will require high intensity supports to find meaningful work and sustain it. Since he will need so much more support, every and any bit of financial assistance will be greatly needed after he transitions to adult life.

Sam dreams to invest in a business for himself -- a Kona Ice franchise -- his favorite snowball truck, and seeks to establish independence in adult life.

With our help, and the ongoing consideration of our state's tax codes, this is a realistic aspiration.

He'd also love to work at a gym, at the movies, or last night he said "help on campaigns for people who advocate for the disability community." He offered to door knock with Delegate Lafferty last year and it almost happened.

This is a person with a physical disability who has great drive to live a full life.

For Sam and our family, \$1K extra a year could mean supported but independent transportation to and from work because he won't be able to drive, participation in job training programs, and social communication programs to improve his lifeskills for adulthood. It could also help with the medication he takes but isn't covered by insurance.

The extension of this tax benefit would show your constituents with disabilities that you care and acknowledge, even wish to offset the physical challenges that are often barriers to living independently and fruitfully... and it also encourages continued employment of people with physical disabilities by padding the safety net just a little. Sometimes not having enough money makes it hard to work.

The Arc Maryland supports HB 806 because it serves as a natural bridge from a policy that only considers one kind of permanent physical disability, to a policy that more inclusively serves a broader community of folks with similar barriers to independent and meaningful living.

Please consider this bill favorably.

Respectfully submitted,

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