



**Maryland Developmental
Disabilities Council**

EMPOWERMENT • OPPORTUNITY • INCLUSION

House Appropriations Committee

January 20, 2021

HB 59: Task Force on Higher Education Students With Chronic Health Conditions

Position: **Support with Amendment**

The Maryland Developmental Disabilities Council (DD Council) is an independent public policy organization that works to advance the inclusion of individuals with developmental disabilities in all facets of community life. As such, increasing access to higher education opportunities for people with developmental disabilities, including people with significant disabilities, is one of the DD Council's priorities. **The DD Council supports HB 59 with the following amendment:**

Page 2; lines 28-29: (ii) the types of chronic physical, DEVELOPMENTAL, mental, and behavioral health 29 conditions experienced by students

HB 59 promotes inclusion and accountability, and is a critical step to expand access to higher education for individuals with disabilities. It does this by creating a task force that will:

- Review data available about students with chronic health conditions;
- Make recommendations about enhancing data collection, eliminating challenges and accommodating more students with chronic health conditions, and meeting the needs of those students.

This is critical because:

- Research shows that receiving a college education and experiencing that exciting time in life is as important for students with disabilities as for those without.ⁱ
- **Adequate services and supports are essential to academic success.**
- **The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, which provides services and supports for children with disabilities, ages birth to 21, does not provide supports needed in college, such as education coaches, assistive technology, tutors, and/or natural supports required to learn.**
- **Individuals with disabilities who attend post-secondary education are more likely to be employed, earning more and requiring less supports.**

The time to create access to inclusive higher education opportunities for all students, including those with developmental disabilities in Maryland is now. This is what people with disabilities and their families want – opportunities to continue their education and learn, live, and participate in campus life alongside their peers without disabilities.

Students with disabilities who attend college with the services and supports necessary to succeed not only acquire valuable knowledge, but learn life skills as well, leading to more independence. The focus of this task force is another important step to increase access and opportunity to college experiences for students with disabilities.

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ⁱ January 2012 *The Higher Education Opportunity Act: Impact on Students with Disabilities*. Madaus, Kowitt, and Laylor.