



Maryland Association
of Community Services



Maryland Developmental
Disabilities Council

**Senate Finance and Budget & Taxation Committees
SB 357: Joint Committee on Workforce Development**

Position: Support

February 11, 2021

The Maryland Association of Community Services and the Developmental Disabilities Council are committed to improving the opportunities and outcomes for Marylanders with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD). One of the most significant challenges facing our community is the high vacancy rate and turnover of the direct support workforce that is the backbone of community inclusion for over 17,000 Marylanders—a crisis that has deepened over the course of the COVID-19 pandemic. While we do not yet have complete pandemic era numbers, prior to the pandemic:

- 1 in 3 direct support staff didn't stay in their jobs 6 months;
- over half of direct support staff did not last a full year (and the vast majority left voluntarily because of high stress, low-wage work-- they can make as much if not more working for retailers and other employers);
- half of all IDD providers had a direct support vacancy rate over 16%;
- 1 in 4 providers had a direct support vacancy rate over 24%.

Our workforce is in *dire* need of additional hires in order to continue to serve all Marylanders with intellectual and developmental disabilities who wish to access community supports. We welcome any effort that would help to raise awareness of the need for employees in this field and promote the availability of career opportunities as a direct support professional supporting the developmental disability community. It is a rewarding and meaningful career with the possibility for career advancement.

We are in strong support of strategies to increase the applicant pool of this essential workforce which plays a critical role in improving the quality of life for thousands of Marylanders with IDD who rely on direct support professionals to make inclusive lives a reality.

Respectfully submitted.

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