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Senate Finance Committee

SB 511: Health and Human Services Transportation Improvement Act of 2023

February 23, 2023

Position: Support

The Arc Maryland is the largest statewide advocacy organization dedicated to the rights and quality of life of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

This bill would create and provide funding for the creation of a Rural Nonemergency Medical Transportation Program that would operate in traditionally underserved, rural parts of the state.

In the southern part of Maryland, a pilot transportation program, Wheels 2 Wellness (the model of the statewide program that would be created through this bill), has been operating with success. It is our understanding that the program has produced both positive health outcomes for people, and savings for the tri-county area.

The Wheels 2 Wellness Program is a collaborative partnership between several nonprofit organizations that have lift vans and other accessible vehicles that were previously not being used during the day. The Arc Southern Maryland is a W2W Program partner. Their vehicles bring people with intellectual and developmental disabilities to and from their day programs and, in the time between, are used to assist seniors and others to get to their medical appointments and procedures, including dialysis and other important, time-sensitive and life sustaining treatments.

The Wheels to Wellness pilot program measured its success by evaluating CRISP Reports, the State Patient Health Information System, to determine impact. **The reports showed savings in hospital charges under their pilot model and improved stats for health outcomes with increases in kept medical appointments (lessened missed appointments).**

According to a survey completed by the Tri-County Council for Southern Maryland (TCCSMD), Charles County dialysis patients consumed 45% of their paratransit funding prior to the pilot. Because of this demand, paratransit was less able to transport riders for other types of rides such as shopping or recreation. The Wheels 2 Wellness pilot program outcomes show that this model works, and with partners and appropriate funding, non-medical transportation may be improved in rural areas. We believe this will reduce strain on residents and the transportation systems of rural areas, while also improving health outcomes of those living there.

We ask the committee for a favorable report on SB 511.

For more information, please contact Ande Kolp, Executive Director, The Arc Maryland.

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