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HOUSE BILL 822: MARYLAND MEDICAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM – EMPLOYED INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES

**Senate Finance Committee
March 26, 2024**

Position: Support

Disability Rights Maryland (DRM) is the protection and advocacy organization for the state of Maryland; the mission of the organization, part of a national network of similar agencies, is to advocate for the legal rights of people with disabilities throughout the state. One of the mandated purposes of DRM's legal work is to ensure that people with disabilities are included in their communities and that they have access to the supports and services that makes community participation possible. House Bill 822 would further this goal by requiring that the Maryland Department of Health provide Maryland Medical Assistance Program services for significantly disabled individuals under the Employed Individuals with Disabilities (EID) Program in accordance with requirements improving programmatic accessibility.

Most notably, HB 822 would eliminate the income, age and asset limit for EID recipients and their spouses. Asset limits and income limits often trap beneficiaries of public assistance programs in poverty and prevent them from obtaining economic self-sufficiency because of their need to maintain their finances under a certain ceiling to qualify for benefits. Additionally, asset and income caps create a barrier that prevents individuals with disabilities who receive EID assistance from community inclusion. These limitations prevent beneficiaries from building up sufficient savings to participate in life milestones such as purchasing a home.

HB 822 would also make the application process more accessible to individuals with disabilities, removing confusing administrative barriers that may otherwise prevent individuals from applying for much-needed benefits in the first place. HB 822 provides clear guidelines for eligibility and requires information to be provided to applicants in plain language.

Individuals with disabilities should not have to sacrifice their potential to earn a living wage and build assets in order to receive their healthcare benefits. For these reasons and more, DRM supports HB 822.

For more information or questions about our position, please contact Audrey Sellers at AudreyS@DisabilityRightsMD.org or 410-787-6993. We thank you for your consideration of House Bill 822, a bill with the power to transform the lives of working Marylanders with significant disabilities.