

Date: March 6, 2025
To: Delegate Joseline A. Pena-Melnyk, Chair, Health and Government Operations Committee and All Committee Members
From: Rob Malone, Chief Executive Officer, The Arc Prince George's County
Re: Testimony In Favor of HB822 Maryland Medical Assistance Program – Employed Individuals with Disabilities

The Honorable Chair Pena-Melnyk and Members of the Committee:

I am Rob Malone, Chief Executive Officer for The Arc Prince George's County. Thank you for this opportunity to testify in support of HB987. This bill is important to make the Employed Individuals with Disabilities (EID) program more accessible.

Nationally, The Arc is our nation's largest disability service organization. We help nearly 1,000,000 people with intellectual and developmental disabilities live their best lives in their communities. Ultimately, we are working to expand people's independence, choice and freedom. HB 822 is helpful in down just that. Just yesterday, a senior in one of our programs expressed interest in working again. He said, "Mr. Malone, I used to work for The Arc and I would love to help you guys out again."

HB 822 eliminates the upper age limit for the Employed Individuals with Disabilities (EID) Program and bases monthly premium amounts on only the applicant's income, not their spouse's.

Limiting EID to people under age 65 restricts opportunities for seniors in our community. Many Marylanders who are 65 or older continue to work and should be eligible for EID. Older people with disabilities need Medicaid to cover services that enable them to live and work in the community. Many of these services - such as personal attendant services and community psychiatric rehabilitation – are not adequately reimbursed by Medicare or private insurance. Older Marylanders with disabilities need Medicaid just as much as residents under age 65.

With regard to premiums, the cost for the EID Program should be based solely on the applicant's income, and not their spouse's. Some current EID enrollees who wish to marry are forced to avoid marriage because it would impose much higher premiums on them. Many people with disabilities cannot work in the community without the services that only Medicaid provides, and the government must support employment for workers with disabilities by ensuring they can afford Medicaid through EID. Nondisabled spouses must pay for their own health insurance and charging higher premiums for Medicaid for disabled spouses inflicts an unfair financial burden on married workers with disabilities and their spouses.

Thank you for helping us make Maryland one of the most progressive states as it relates to opportunities for people with disabilities. I respectfully urge you to issue a favorable report on HB 822.