



Maryland Developmental  
Disabilities Council

CREATING CHANGE • IMPROVING LIVES



## House Health Government Operations Committee

March 19, 2025

### SB 157: Maryland Disability Service Animal Program – Establishment

Position: **Support**

The Maryland Developmental Disabilities Council (DD Council) is an independent, public policy organization that creates changes to make it possible for people with developmental disabilities to live the lives they want with the support they need. The Arc Maryland is the largest statewide advocacy organization dedicated to the rights and quality of life of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. As such, we support SB 157.

**Service animals can play an important role in the lives of people with disabilities, especially children – eliminating barriers, creating opportunities, and promoting independence. Service animals are different from therapy animals or support animals because they are trained differently, perform different kinds of tasks, and have access to public places at different levels.**

A service animal is “any dog that is individually trained to do work or perform tasks for the benefit of an individual with a disability, including a physical, sensory, psychiatric, intellectual, or other mental disability.”<sup>1</sup> For example, a service animal may safely guide a person who is blind or deaf; alert others to medical emergencies, like seizures, or pull a wheelchair.

**It is costly to provide the training and support necessary for service animals and for the people that need them – many of whom have developmental disabilities. As such, the Council supports the establishment of the Maryland Disability Service Animal Program, and appreciates the efforts by the Sponsor to ensure all people who need service animals are eligible for the Maryland Disability Service Animal Program.**

Contact:

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<sup>1</sup> 28 C.F.R. §35.104; 28 C.F.R. §36.104.