

# THE REAL LIVES CAMPAIGN

## *Save Our Services*



## Underfunding: Why It Matters

Of the 22,000 Marylanders who receive some type of support from the Maryland Developmental Disabilities Administration, approximately 12,000 receive residential, supported employment, and day habilitation waiver services.

These supports are funded in a manner that is outdated and significantly inadequate to meet people's needs and desires.

## Underfunding of supports has a major impact on the quality of people's lives

- **Direct support staff are low-wage workers who often leave their position to earn a higher salary in other settings;**
- **Transportation, a critical component for employment and quality of life, is funded at approximately half the actual cost,** reducing the availability and flexibility of transportation services;
- **Opportunity and choice erode** as DDA's funding of community supports becomes less and less adequate to pay for even basic costs in congregate settings.

## The rate system that pays for community supports is outdated and inadequate

- **The current "matrix" rate structure was developed twenty years ago, based on the funding and best practices at that time,** including larger group homes, and less emphasis on supported employment;
- A cost containment measure put in place several years ago **froze each person's funding level at their initial "matrix score"**, making it far more difficult to meet people's changing needs as they grow older;
- **Additional mandates over the years from the State, such as expanded requirements from the Board of Nursing, have not been funded,** eating away funding intended for community life.

## The Real Lives Campaign

### *An Overview*

Born out of a growing sense of urgency, the Real Lives Campaign is a grassroots effort to educate policy-makers about the need to take action and address the underfunding of community supports for Marylanders with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

The Real Lives Campaign will provide an opportunity for self-advocates, families, and direct support staff to come together and tell their own stories about the importance of community supports in their lives.

The campaign will include a number of methods to educate the public and policy-makers, including:

- **short video stories** about people who receive community supports and the impact on their lives;
- **written stories that pair people** who receive supports with their direct support staff or their families, showing the broad impact across the community;
- **a website that provides a central media location** for stories, facts, figures, news, and action opportunities;
- **outreach across the state** to share information and bring people together who want to speak out on this critical issue.

The Real Lives Campaign will provide tools and opportunities to help self-advocates, families, and direct support staff be on the frontline of the effort to address the underfunding of community supports.

It is important to note that families and self-advocates have been integrally-involved with the creation of the Real Lives Campaign, developing the name and message of the campaign itself.