



The Arc Maryland:Action Alert

Please Contact Your Members of the Economic Matters Committee this Morning!

Last night, the Economic Matters Committee voted unanimously to amend HB166 to cut DD Community Funding down to a 3% increase each year "in order to take care of other Medicaid Providers including Behavioral Health, Assisted Living, and Home Health Services, and Medical Day (which will all now be funded at around 4% in the bill).

One member of the committee said the cost to fund DD Community Services at the 7% (included in the bill) and also fund the other providers with % increases would make the fiscal note too high, so they needed to reduce the cost of the measure in order for it to pass.

This action made DD Community Providers the LOWEST funded providers in the bill!

Please contact ALL of the members of the Economic Matters Committee this morning by phone and email.

Tell them:

- Your vote to cut funding in the bill for DD Community Providers will decimate the DD Community Services System, and harm tens of thousands of people with disabilities, their families and the workers who support them.

- When you cut DD Community Services to fund other Medicaid providers in your amendments last night, your actions made developmental disabilities providers THE LOWEST FUNDED providers in the bill!

(DD would be funded at 3% each year while other Medicaid providers would be funded at approx. 4% because they based increases on the DLS estimates)

- At a mere 3% annual increase, the funding for DD Community Services will NOT KEEP PACE with the increases in the minimum wage, and funding for newly-hired (starting wage) DSPs will be LESS than the state minimum wage.
- It's not too late to reverse what you did and make it right!

It is the responsibility of our state representatives to make informed decisions based on facts. The facts are, if we want to responsibly increase the minimum wage of the state, we must consider the real implementation costs for those who do the work of/hold contracts with the state. If we cannot "afford" to increase the minimum wage due to the fiscal note, we cannot resolve that problem with the numbers simply by cutting the funding for people with disabilities.

So...What happened last night?

The Economic Matters Committee held a work session at 6:30 last night to discuss a smaller work group's recommended amendments to the Fight for \$15 bill (HB166)

Several amendments to different sections of the bill were presented for consideration. Here is a summary of the amendments that passed out of committee:

1. Reduce the DD Community Provider (Services) reimbursement rate from 7%, 5.5%, 5.5% etc. in the bill and replace with language to provide funding to all of the Medicaid providers "at a rate that is 1% above the DLS recommendation for funding"

increases. For reference, the DLS recommended a 2% increase this year for DD as we had no mandated increase in legislation. Mandates for Mental Health (Keep the Door Open Act) made their DLS recommended increase 3%. Assisted Living, Medical Day, and Home Health were also 3%. If we add 1% to each of these, the increase in the bill for DD Community Services would reduce to 3% each year, while the other Medicaid providers would be at ~4%.

2. Restored exemptions to the MW law (kept current law related to wage treatment of agricultural, tipped wage and seasonal workers)

3. Delayed phase-in of increases to January of each year and lengthened the runway. The new proposed schedule for increases and amounts of increases per year would be:

\$11.00 January 1, 2020

\$11.75 January 1, 2021

\$12.50 January 1, 2022

\$13.25 January 1, 2023

\$14.00 January 1, 2024

\$15.00 January 1, 2025

4. Added "pause" option: Every year, the Board of Public Works (BPW) will look at the seasonally adjusted employment data to compare 1st 6 months of the year with the 2nd 6 months. If the seasonally adjusted employment % is negative, BPW could then decide to look at the performance of the state revenue and take the action to implement a "one-time only" pause to the schedule to increase the minimum wage. This would be decided ~October of each year. This would provide an "off ramp" similar to NY and California MW bills. Once the pause is used, it cannot be used again. **If any year is paused, there is NO INCREASE in funding that year for Medicaid providers.**

5. Workers under the age of 18 can be paid at a wage that is 85% of the minimum wage.

6. Struck indexing from the bill (the MW increases will stop at \$15 after January 1, 2025)

7. Tip credit. Recommend leaving tipped base wage at \$3.63

Please emails or call members of the Economic Matters Committee asap TODAY

After you contact your members of the Economic Matters Committee this morning, please then contact ALL of your district Delegates and House Speaker, [Mike Busch](#) with the same message. If you do not know who represents your district, please click [HERE](#) to search.

Last note: It was clear in the remarks last night that many of our legislators have NO IDEA how badly their decision will hit DD Community Services. Although they know there will be a negative impact, they seemed confused about just how bad this would be for us. We must educate them and MAKE SURE they know what they have done and what they must now do to fix their actions before it is too late!

Although not every committee member voted favorable to pass the bill out of committee, EVERY committee member voted in favor of the amendment to the bill to decrease DD Community Services Funding! They are all responsible for this action.