



MARYLAND DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES COALITION

Dedicated to the rights and quality of life for people with developmental disabilities in Maryland

Support Children with Disabilities

The following legislation affects children with disabilities and their families:

HB 420: State and Local Parks – Play Area Accessibility – Communication Boards

Requires the Department of Natural Resources or local governing boards to include a communication board when constructing a new playground or making changes to existing playgrounds.

- **Communication boards promote accessibility.** Communication boards allow people with limited language to express their needs and wants by using images and symbols.
- **Communication boards are inclusive playground features.** Communication boards, especially when paired with other inclusive playground features, encourage a sense of community for children and adults.
- **We support the sponsor’s amendment to the definition.** “COMMUNICATION BOARD” MEANS A DEVICE THAT DISPLAYS PHOTOS, SYMBOLS, OR ILLUSTRATIONS WITH WORDS AND BRAILLE TO SUPPLEMENT OR PLACE SPOKEN LANGUAGE AS A MEANS OF EXPRESSION AND COMMUNICATION. ~~ENABLE INDIVIDUALS WITH LIMITED LANGUAGE SKILLS TO EXPRESS THEMSELVES AND COMMUNICATE.~~

HB 901/SB 797: Higher Education – Part-Time Senatorial and Delegate Scholarships - Alterations

Allows the Maryland Higher Education Commission to waive certain eligibility requirements so students with disabilities can apply for the Senatorial and Delegate Scholarships.

- **Not all students with disabilities can take 6 credits in a semester, and others may not be getting a degree.** Allowing those students to still access the scholarships will help.
- **Many college students need access to financial aid.** Making sure all students get the same access to financial aid to take college courses makes sense.

HB 903/SB 797: Education – Access to Attorneys, Advocates, and Consultants for Special Education Program and Fund - Establishment

Establishes the Access to Attorneys, Advocates, and Consultants for Special Education Program. The purpose of the Program is to provide funding for resources and services to eligible students with disabilities and their families who need legal, advocacy, and consultant services.

- **Many families need and want advocacy support as they navigate the special education process for their children.** Having support and assistance helps parents advocate for their children and increases the likelihood that issues will resolve at the meeting table rather than in a hearing.
- **Few free and low cost legal options are available for families.** By allowing low and lower income families to access assistance, more families will be able to get the advice, support, and representation that other families are able to secure on their own, and will be better able to address difficult issues with their child’s team.

For additional information about the bills highlighted here, please contact:

Rachel London, Maryland Developmental Disabilities Council, RLondon@md-council.org

Leslie Seid Margolis, Disability Rights Maryland, LeslieM@disabilityrightsmd.org

Ande Kolp, The Arc Maryland, AKolp@thearcmd.org