



**The Maryland Developmental Disabilities Council creates change to make it possible for people with developmental disabilities to live the lives they want with the support they need.**

***Public Policy Vision: People with and without disabilities in Maryland live, learn, work, and play together.***

*We promote policies, create change, and find solutions to improve the lives of people with disabilities. We create change in many ways. One way is when we work with and advise leaders in state government and the state legislature.*

The policy priorities below are listed in alphabetical order.

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## **CIVIL RIGHTS**

- Advocate for laws and policies that ensure people with developmental disabilities have the same rights as other Marylanders.

## **COMMUNITY SUPPORTS**

- Make sure the State budget supports people with disabilities. Advocate for full funding of agencies, departments, services, and programs that are critical for people with disabilities.
- Increase access to formal and informal supports for people with developmental disabilities and their families. Informal supports are provided by family, friends, and the community. Formal supports are provided by paid professionals.
- Improve services and supports for people with developmental disabilities.
- Support policies and practices that increase opportunities for people to live, work, and meaningfully engage in their communities.
- Ensure that DDA policies, practices, and funding support all transitioning youth to get a job, go to college, and participate in their communities after school. Transitioning youth are young adults with developmental disabilities who need support to get a job, go to college, and participate in their communities.
- Advocate for service provider rates that ensure high-quality supports.
- Support efforts to increase the number of direct support professionals with the knowledge, skill, and ability to provide high-quality support.
- Promote awareness about the services and supports available to military and veteran families who have family members with developmental disabilities.

## **CRIMINAL JUSTICE**

- Support efforts that increase what professionals in the criminal justice system know and understand about people with developmental disabilities.
- Advocate for policies and practices that improve interactions with law enforcement.
- Advocate for policies and practices in jails and prisons so they better support people with developmental disabilities.

## **DIVERSITY**

- Support efforts that reach diverse and underserved people and regions of the state.
- Make sure information and resources are accessible. This includes plain language, different languages, large print, and braille.
- Reduce discrimination against people with developmental disabilities who also have one or more other diverse identities such as an underserved race, ethnicity, national origin, religion, sexual orientation, or others.

## **EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION**

- Increase access to early childhood education, including prekindergarten and child care, where children with and without disabilities can learn and play together so all children are ready for school.

## **EDUCATION**

- Promote policies that improve outcomes for students with disabilities. This means they have access to the general education curriculum, appropriate assessments, and the services and supports they need to succeed.
- Advocate for school policies and practices that help staff understand and respond to trauma. This creates a positive, safe, and supportive school where students learn, and they are less likely to go to prison after school. *Trauma is when something bad happens. It may have a lasting impact on a person.*
- Advocate for policies and practices that better support children and youth with developmental disabilities and their families during all academic transitions.

## **EMPLOYMENT**

- Expand opportunities for people with developmental disabilities to have jobs they want, making a living wage, in the community alongside co-workers without disabilities.
- Support efforts to make sure the new paid family and medical leave law works well for everyone, including people with developmental disabilities and the agencies that support them.
- Advocate for policies and practices that better support students with developmental disabilities to explore different careers and have work experiences so they are more prepared to work after school.

## **HEALTHCARE**

- Support medical, dental, and behavioral healthcare policies that meet the needs of children and adults with developmental disabilities.

## **HOUSING**

- Advocate for policies, practices, and funding that support more housing options that are affordable and accessible, and allow people with and without developmental disabilities to live in the community together.

## **INSTITUTIONS**

- Advocate for the closure of all state-funded institutions for people with intellectual disabilities.
- Support expansion of high-quality community options, including both Self-Directed Services model and the Community Provider model. People with disabilities should have the option to choose the model that works best for them.

## **LEADERSHIP AND ADVOCACY**

- Ensure the DDA and other state agencies provide opportunities for people with lived experience and their families to provide input into the policies, programs, and services that affect their lives.
- Support people with developmental disabilities to be leaders and advocates so they can shape policies, programs, and services that affect their lives.

## **RECREATION**

- Increase access to parks, playgrounds, and other recreation spaces where people with and without disabilities can play together.

## **SUPPORTED DECISION MAKING**

- Support efforts to educate people with developmental disabilities, families, and others about supported decision-making, which is a way for adults to get help from other people to make choices and decisions for themselves.

## **TRANSPORTATION**

- Advocate for policies that increase access to reliable and accessible transportation throughout Maryland.

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**The Council can provide information, perspective, ideas, and analysis about how legislation will affect people with developmental disabilities and their families.**

**Contact:** Rachel London, Executive Director, [rlondon@md-council.org](mailto:rlondon@md-council.org)