



Maryland Developmental Disabilities Council

Council Meeting Minutes

December 12, 2024

Present:

Kevin Armstrong, Angie Auldridge, Richard Bauernschub, Damon Briggs, Carmen Brown, Kalani Brown, Meeka Caldwell, Laura-Sun Cefaratti, Amanda Distefano, Kay Han, Marlana Hutchinson, Jarred Jones, Karena Jones, Meghan Jones, Kim McKay, Dee Sapp, Justin Stocker, Maureen van Stone, and Marcus Whitman

Absent:

Jody Boone, Lucy Caltagirone, Laura Chavez-Luna, Staci Forrest, Kathy Hargett, Tiffany Joseph, Theresa Kuhns, Dr. Sohail Qarni, and Kate Szymanski

Staff:

Rachel London, Dr. Stephanie Dolamore, and Chris Rogers

Guests:

Kelly Boyd, RN, Chimes School and Azeb Adere, EESNC

The meeting was called to order at 3:30 p.m. by Dee Sapp, Council Chairperson.

Welcome and Introductions – Dee Sapp

- Dee Sapp welcomed everyone to the Council meeting.

Public Comments

- Azeb Adere introduced herself as the President for the Ethiopian Eritrean Special Needs Community (EESNC), and explained what EESNC does to support the community. She thanked Council members for the Cultural Brokers in Maryland grant.

Approval of Minutes – Meghan Jones

- M/S/P to approve the September 19, 2024 minutes.

Chair Report – Dee Sapp

- The Executive Committee approved funding for 2 small continuation grants because they are activities in our State Plan. Those grants are:
 - Independence Now for the Youth Leadership Forum
 - The Arc Maryland for Together We're Better

Executive Director Report – Rachel London

- The federal budget is under a Continuing Resolution until December 20, 2024. We expect it to be continued again until March 2025. We did receive \$280,130 in October as the first part of our FFY 2025 funding.
- We are planning not to panic about the changes likely to occur under the new Federal administration. Rachel explained what happened at the last proposed budget meeting. Given the uncertainty, she developed a plan for resources focused on the Council's impact and outcomes, and will not be hiring new staff right now.
- The work with the Plain Language Initiative continues. Standards and an initial Plan will be sent to the Governor by the end of the year.
- The Direct Support Professional Workforce Strategy Think Tank released its report with 25 recommendations. The Council has been having a lot of conversations with a focus on the low cost recommendations.
- We are getting ready for the legislative session which we will talk more about later, but there is a \$2.7 billion budget deficit in Maryland that will likely be addressed by cuts. We won't know specifics until the Governor releases his proposed budget in January.

State Plan End of the Year Report – Rachel London

- Rachel reviewed the activities and outcomes for each goal in the State Plan. She also provided an overview of the amount of money spent on grants and staff resources.

2027 – 2032 State Plan Work Plan – Dee Sapp

- The State Plan leads the work of the Council. It sets the goals the Council tries to achieve every five years.
- The State Plan Work Plan shows what we have done so far and what we will do over the next 18 months until we submit the State Plan to the federal government.

- What we have done so far:
 - Introduced the process and State Plan Work Team
 - Provided input on the public survey which will be released soon
 - Reviewed our progress on the current State Plan
- What we still have to do:
 - The Staff will draft background on the specific issues and work with the standing work teams to review and revise
 - During September's 2025 Council meeting, we will review the public input from the survey, and review the SPWT recommendations.
 - Then work begins to develop the target diversity objective and the collaboration objective.
 - In December 2025, we will vote on what to include in the State Plan so staff can develop goals, objectives, and activities to present at the March 2026 Council meeting.
 - In June 2026, we will consider that public input and vote on the final state plan!

Public Policy Platform – Rachel London

Rachel reminded everyone that the priorities align with our State Plan, and they extend beyond the legislative session. Since the priorities align with the State Plan, no approval is required.

- Next steps include posting the Public Policy Platform to our website, and sending them to each Senator and Delegate.
- Staff is also working on a visual for the priorities that we will also post to our website and have for meeting with legislators, policymakers, and others.

2025 Legislative Updates and Planning – Senator Craig Zucker and all

- Dee introduced Senator Craig Zucker from District 14 in Montgomery County. Senator Zucker talked about his partnership with the Council, thanked Rachel, Dee, and the entire Council for everything we do. Senator Zucker spoke about State budget issues, the importance of engaging with legislators, and his priorities for 2025.

His priorities include a focus on equity and access, and:

- Making sure budget cuts do not affect people with disabilities
- Funding for End the Wait Now which would support people with disabilities to get off waiting lists and into Medicaid Waiver services
- More employment opportunities for people with disabilities

- Support for TerpsEXCEED, the inclusive higher education program at University of Maryland

Dee provided a brief overview of the legislative session. It starts January 8, 2025, and lasts for 90 days. She reminded everyone that Council members should not act or speak on behalf of the Council unless we have talked about it first. You can always talk to anyone about your feelings as a person with a disability, a family member, or a constituent.

- Chris then talked about Council member engagement during the session.
- Chris will host bi-weekly meetings (every other Monday) for legislative updates.
- Opportunity for Council members to learn about what is going on.
- 5 Council members testified last year, and we want to increase that in 2025.

Meeting Adjourned