



2025 Legislative Overview

The Maryland Developmental Disabilities Council is proud of the work we did this year. The Council tracked 195 bills and took action on 100 of them. We supported bills on employment and education, healthcare, criminal justice, language access, voting rights, and more, all of which will create change and improve lives.

This year the state budget required a lot of advocacy. The Council, along with our partners in the Developmental Disabilities Coalition, tirelessly worked together against budget cuts to services for people with developmental disabilities. We did not do it alone. People with disabilities, families, and providers showed up to advocate. The Council collaborated with legislative leaders and the Governor's office.

We educated leaders on the impact of these cuts.

We empowered advocates in the community to be involved in the legislative process.

We offered solutions to find a way forward.

As a result of the work of the Council, the DD Coalition, and the entire community, budget leaders in the General Assembly and the Governor restored most of the cuts.

Keep reading to learn more about how we advocated for change this year.



Developmental Disabilities Administration Budget

The Governor's proposed budget for FY 2026 included big budget cuts to the Developmental Disabilities Administration (DDA) for the current year and next year. The proposed budget cut \$194 million in FY 2025 (the current year) and \$457 million in FY 2026 (next year).

After the budget was released, the community came together to save our services through the power of advocacy. The Council and DD Coalition worked with budget leaders in the General Assembly and the Governor's office to get more money to support Marylanders with developmental disabilities.

The final budget restored much of the funds for DDA (total \$2.7 billion), and added more money to address over spending (deficit spending). We also successfully advocated to ensure the Low Intensity Support Services (LISS) program was not eliminated. The amount available is less in FY 2026, and the cap was lowered from \$2,000 to \$1,000.

We are grateful to the budget leaders, the Governor and his team, and the Maryland General Assembly for working with us to find solutions that reduce the impact of budget cuts on those that rely on critical services. This year was hard, but we remain committed to advocating, creating change, and improving lives.

The table below is a timeline of when different budget announcements happened.

Date	Details	FY25 Amount	FY26 Amount
January 15	Proposed Budget from Governor Moore	- \$194 million	- \$457 million
February 20	Governor and Budget Leaders Announce Commitment to Restore FY 25 Funding	+ \$152 million	
March 4	Supplemental Budget Released by Governor Moore	+ \$277 million	+ \$283 million
March 20 March 26	House and Senate Budget Committee Decisions		+ \$292.5 million
April 7	General Assembly Passes Final Budget with Restored Funding	+ \$429 million	+ \$606.2 million

All dollars are a combination of money from the state (50%) and from the federal government (50%).

Leading the Way

One of the Council's goals is that **people with developmental disabilities are leaders and advocates**. During this legislative session, Marylanders with developmental disabilities showed the power of their advocacy.

With Council support, people with disabilities and their family members showed up in Annapolis to save our services and oppose the proposed budget cuts. They met with legislators. They attended rallies and hearings. More than 800 people gathered on Developmental Disabilities Day to advocate for DDA funding, voting rights, and more.

These advocates shared their perspectives all session long, and it worked!

“Instead of cuts, we need investments. When we support people with disabilities, we strengthen families, we strengthen communities.”

– Council member
Meeka Caldwell at the Rally to
Save Our DD Services.



Photos from the Rally to Save Our DD Services in Annapolis on February 3, 2025. *Photos courtesy of KO Public Affairs.*



DDA Reports and Actions Required

The DDA must send the following reports to the Maryland General Assembly budget committees. Most of these reports cover the cost containment actions taken in FY 2025 and 2026.

- One report about the reduction in State-only funded services. This includes information on the status of the plan implementation, the plan to transition eligible people to Medicaid waivers, and actual people moved onto waivers.
- One report about the limit on individual and family directed goods and services (IFDGS) for people who self-direct their services.
- One report about the Low Intensity Support Services program (LISS). This includes information about the number of people who get LISS funding, the average amount of funding per person, and the total amount of funding requested.
- One report, submitted by the Maryland Department of Health, on the “End the Wait” initiatives for Medicaid waivers.



Photos from Developmental Disabilities Day at the Legislature in Annapolis on February 13, 2025. *Photos by Jennifer Bishop.*

Priority Bills in the 2025 Legislative Session

The Council's vision is for people with and without disabilities in Maryland to live, learn, work, and play together. We actively worked on a lot of important bills this year to make that happen. Some of these bills are listed below. Please visit the [Legislative Reports page](#) on our website to view the full list of bills we took action on in 2025.

Live

HB 31/SB 382: Consumer Protection - Right to Repair - Powered Wheelchairs

This bill removes barriers to repair powered wheelchairs. Powered wheelchair users often face long waits when something goes wrong with their wheelchair. That can be harmful to people who rely on powered wheelchairs for mobility and independence. **The bill passed.**

HB 141: Task Force on Loneliness and Isolation

This bill would have established a task force to study and make recommendations related to loneliness and isolation experienced by Marylanders. **The bill did not pass.**

People with developmental disabilities experience significantly higher rates of loneliness and social isolation than people without disabilities. Because of that, the Council worked with the DD Coalition and the bill sponsor to support an amendment that would have made sure people with DD were members of the Task Force.

HB 1244/SB 1027: Maryland Developmental Disabilities Administration Waiver Advisory Council - Establishment

This bill codifies in law the Maryland Developmental Disabilities Administration (DDA) Waiver Advisory Council. The Waiver Advisory Council gives DDA valuable input on the design and delivery of Medicaid waiver programs. The bill also enhances representation and gives people with lived experience a greater voice in shaping services. **The bill passed.**



The Council supported Delegate Aaron Kaufman's bill that makes it easier to repair powered wheelchairs.

HB 1473: State Government – Equal Access to Public Services for Individuals With Limited English Proficiency and Individuals With Disabilities

This bill requires state agencies to have a clear language access plan. The Governor’s Office of Immigrant Affairs and the Maryland Department of Disabilities will co-chair an advisory council to develop templates for language access plans. This helps Marylanders with disabilities and limited English proficiency get access to the information they need in their preferred language. **The bill passed.**

HB 450: Maryland Transit Administration – Disability Reduced Fare Program – Renewal for Permanently Disabled Individuals

This bill requires the Maryland Transit Administration to automatically renew Disability Reduced Fare Program certification for users who have permanent disabilities. This will remove a barrier for people with developmental disabilities who rely on public transportation through Maryland Transit Administration. **The bill passed.**

The Maryland Transit Administration (MTA) offers reduced fares for people with disabilities. Eligible people must fill out an application, which includes information from their doctor verifying their disability. They must complete this process every few years to renew their status, even if they have a permanent disability, such as an intellectual or developmental disability. This creates a lot of extra work for people who rely on this service and have a permanent disability.

Voting

Voting is a fundamental right. All Marylanders need to have the same access to vote. The Council supports bills that increase access to voting. With more options for voting, more people with disabilities will be able to vote.

HB 317: Election Law – Curbside Voting – Pilot Program

This bill would have required the State Board of Elections test how to do curbside voting and report to the General Assembly. Curbside voting makes elections more accessible for many people with disabilities. **The bill did not pass.**

HB 781/SB 66: Election Law – Voting By Elderly Voters and Voters with Disabilities (Accessible and Expanded Voting Act of Maryland)

This bill would have required the State to establish guidelines for local boards of elections to have a faster voting process for older adult voters and voters with disabilities. This would have made voting easier for people with disabilities. **The bill did not pass.**

HB 816/SB 615: Election Law – Petitions and Ballot Questions – Contents, Plain Language Requirement, and Procedures

This bill would have made changes to the way that petitions for new ballot questions and questions on a ballot are written. It would have required that they are written in plain language and contain a summary of the practical outcome of the question. Plain language makes information more accessible for everyone, including people with disabilities. **The bill did not pass.**

HB 983/SB 685: Election Law – Local Boards of Elections – Language Assistance Program

This bill expands language assistance during elections. This means more voting materials will be available in other languages besides English, including signed languages. This bill says the State Board of Elections will provide language assistance in any county with a significant need. **The bill passed.**

HB 1097/SB 929: Workgroup on Mail-in Ballot Accessibility

This bill would have expanded language assistance during elections. This means more voting materials would be available in other languages besides English, including signed languages. This bill says the State Board of Elections would provide language assistance in any county with a significant need. **The bill did not pass.**



The Council supports bills that give people with disabilities better access to voting.

Criminal Justice

People with developmental disabilities need to be appropriately supported in all parts of the criminal justice system. This means increasing access to justice and making sure people with developmental disabilities are treated fairly in court and in jails and prisons.

HB 703/SB 507: Criminal Procedure – Diagnosis of a Developmental Disability or Intellectual Disability – Evidence

People with developmental disabilities may not receive a fair legal process. This bill would have required a judge or court commissioner to consider someone’s intellectual and/or developmental disability when deciding whether or not to release them before a trial. This bill would have provided an opportunity to divert people with developmental disabilities from going to jail or prison. **The bill did not pass.**

HB 940: Criminal Justice – Probation Before Judgment – Defendants Diagnosed With Autism or Intellectual Disabilities

This bill would have required a court to place a defendant with autism or an intellectual disability on probation before judgment under certain circumstances. This would mean the person is put on probation before a judge finds them guilty of a crime. While a person is on probation they have to follow certain rules set by the Court. **The bill did not pass.**

Learn and Play

HB 458/SB 603: University of Maryland, College Park Campus – TerpsEXCEED Program – Funding

This bill allows the Governor to include money in the state budget for the TerpsEXCEED program. The TerpsEXCEED program provides students with developmental disabilities a full college experience at the University of Maryland and provides educational and employment opportunities. This funding will expand access so more people with developmental disabilities can attend the program. **The bill passed.**

The Council strongly supports increased access to inclusive higher education options for people with developmental disabilities. People who participate in inclusive higher education programs, like TerpsEXCEED, are more than twice as likely to exit with paid jobs, make more money, and use fewer SSI benefits than their peers without post-secondary education. That is why the Council played a large role in successfully advocating for and providing funding to start TerpsEXCEED.

HB 694/SB 851: Public Schools – Individuals with Disabilities – Main Entrance Accessibility and Emergency Planning

This bill would have required each county board of education to publish on the website the number of main entrances to public school buildings that are not accessible for people with disabilities, and would have required local school systems to send emergency plans to the Maryland State Department of Education. **The bill did not pass.**



The Council supports increased access to higher education opportunities for students with disabilities, such as the TerpsEXCEED program.

HB 771: Student Health – Program for Student Dental Health – Established

This bill – as amended – would have required the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) to create standards for recommended dental exams, information for students and parents about the importance of dental health, and how to find dental insurance and dentists. It also would have required MSDE to support each county board of education to provide the information. **The bill did not pass.**

The Council supports efforts to increase access to dental care for children. When the bill was first released, it required each student in public schools to get and submit a certificate of dental health to stay in school. Some children with disabilities are unable to get routine dental care and it is possible that some children with disabilities would not be able to attend school if dental screening was required. The Council and The Arc Maryland provided that information to the General Assembly and the requirement was removed.

HB 912: Institutions of Higher Education – Instructor Training – Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

This bill would have required colleges to train instructors about the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act (504). This would make higher education opportunities and the necessary accommodations to succeed in them more accessible for students with disabilities. **The bill did not pass.**

HB 1127: Public Schools – Water Safety – Instructional Content

This bill would have required local boards of education to offer water safety instruction to public school students. This information would have been offered to students in elementary, middle, and high school. **The bill did not pass.**

HB 1204: Public and Nonpublic Schools – Student Elopement – Notice and Reporting Requirements (Ace's Law)

This bill requires schools to notify a parent or guardian if a student attempts to or does wander away (elopes) from school without permission. Currently, schools do not have to tell a parent or guardian on the day that their child has wandered away, or attempted to wander away from school. **The bill passed.**



“Without these accommodations, I wouldn't have been able to succeed [in college]. I hope that others can be as fortunate as I am.” – Council member Justin Stocker in his testimony to the House Appropriations Committee on HB 912.

HB 862/SB 452: Child Care Affordability Commission – Establishment

This bill would have established a commission to study and make recommendations about child care affordability in Maryland. This Council encouraged the commission to include someone with knowledge about families of young children with disabilities. This would help the commission better address the affordability of childcare for families of children with developmental disabilities. **The bill did not pass.**

HB 1475: Office of Child Care Advisory Council – Publicly Funded Prekindergarten – Analysis and Report (Mixed Delivery Model Viability Act)

This bill requires an analysis of the mixed delivery, publicly funded pre-kindergarten system established under the Blueprint for Maryland’s Future. Part of this analysis will look at how to provide quality early childhood education for students with and without disabilities together in the same classrooms. **The bill passed.**

The Council supports efforts to improve child care and education so all children and youth learn and play together. Both of these bills look at ways to make child care and early childhood education more accessible to all Maryland families. This includes making sure that families of children with developmental disabilities have access to child care options that work for them and allow children with and without disabilities to learn with each other.

Work

HB 430: Employed Individuals with Disabilities Program – Upper Age Limit – Prohibition

This bill would have removed the current age cap of 65 years old for the Employed Individuals with Disabilities (EID) program. It also would have prohibited the Maryland Department of Health from establishing an upper age limit for eligibility to receive EID services. This would have allowed people with disabilities who rely on EID services to continue working past age 65 without losing their services and support. **The bill did not pass.**

HB 502/SB 433: Office of Disability Employment Advancement Policy and Maryland as a Model Employer Initiative – Established

This bill establishes the Office of Disability Employment Advancement and Policy within the Department of Disabilities. It also creates the Maryland as a Model Employer Initiative to promote the recruitment, hiring, retention, and career advancement of people with disabilities across State government. **The bill passed.**

The Council supports increased access to employment for people with disabilities. People with developmental disabilities need and want to work, earn real wages, and thrive in Maryland's economy. Only 45% of Marylanders with disabilities (age 18-64) are employed, compared to 79% of their peers without disabilities. Programs like the Maryland as a Model Employer Initiative help expand employment opportunities for Marylanders with developmental disabilities.



Governor Moore signed HB 502 into law on April 8.

By the Numbers



The Maryland General Assembly **reviewed 2,617 bills**.
877 of the bills **passed**.

The Council **took action on 100 bills**. The Council **watched, but did not take action on another 95 bills**.



**Maryland Developmental
Disabilities Council**

CREATING CHANGE • IMPROVING LIVES

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