



**Maryland Developmental
Disabilities Council**

CREATING CHANGE • IMPROVING LIVES

Maryland Developmental Disabilities Council Statement

The Maryland Developmental Disabilities Council's (Council) vision is that people with and without disabilities in Maryland live, learn, work, and play together. That vision starts in our schools. Students with disabilities should learn alongside their peers and have the same opportunities to participate, achieve, and prepare for life after school. Special education is not separate from general education. A strong public education system supports all students to learn and succeed together.

The Council opposes the federal changes that transfer the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services (OSERS) from the U.S. Department of Education (ED) to the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) and the Office for Civil Rights (OCR) to the Department of Justice (DOJ) through Interagency Agreements. These changes will be harmful to students with disabilities in Maryland and across the country. Spreading these programs out across different agencies makes it harder for children with disabilities to get the support they need to thrive.

Congress specifically said ED must oversee the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), the vocational rehabilitation programs, and safeguard the civil rights of students with disabilities. Moving OSERS shifts important education, transition, and employment programs to an agency primarily focused on health care. This weakens the connection between students with and without disabilities, and programs that prepare students for college, work, and life after high school.

Moving OCR out of the Department of Education also weakens the connection between civil rights protections and the education system, making it harder to ensure students with disabilities have equal access to education.

Keeping these programs together within the education system helps ensure children with and without disabilities learn and succeed together. It also gives students with disabilities the support, opportunities, and protections they need to build successful futures and live, learn, work, and play alongside their peers.

The Council will continue to monitor these federal changes and work to ensure that education, civil rights, and transition supports remain connected within the education system so that students with disabilities have the opportunities, protections, and support they need to succeed.