

2025

Legislative Wrap-Up



The Arc[®]

Maryland

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THE 2025 LEGISLATIVE SESSION



The Maryland General Assembly completed its work for the regular 2025 Legislative Session and adjourned at midnight on April 7, 2025. The state budget was a focal point of the 2025 Legislative Session, with much attention shifting from aspirational legislation (to create new programs and initiatives) and the preservation and implementation of previously passed initiatives, including The Blueprint for Maryland's Future and Maryland Family and Medical Leave Insurance (FAMLI) Program, to utter survival.



Entering session, our state faced a budget shortfall of roughly \$3.3 billion. This dire circumstance was influenced by many factors, including the policies of a new president, the end of federal pandemic assistance, lower-than-anticipated consumer spending, and lower-than-expected tax revenues.

While we anticipated the session would be difficult, and that our community might not receive the DD funding increases we had requested in order to keep pace with rising inflation and costs of providing quality services and supports, we could not have predicted what happened next.

Approximately one week into the 447th Legislative Session, the Governor's FY26 Proposed Budget was released with draconian funding cuts for Developmental Disabilities services, amounting to \$194 million for FY25 and \$474 million for FY26: an astounding 22% cut to our entire Developmental Disabilities budget. The proposed budget cuts, if adopted, would have had catastrophic impacts on people with developmental disabilities, community providers, thousands of Direct Support Professionals who comprise the essential workforce to support people with developmental disabilities to live their best lives, and family members who rely on services for their loved ones so they may continue to work.

The Maryland Developmental Disabilities Coalition and grassroots advocates across Maryland immediately set to work: to educate lawmakers on the importance of funding for these services for the more than 18,000 people with developmental disabilities who live and work in Maryland.



THE 2025 LEGISLATIVE SESSION

Over the following days and weeks, we met with lawmakers and members of the Governor's office and came to the table in good faith with alternative cuts that would hurt – but not dismantle – the systems we had collectively built.

We experienced promising collaboration and believed we had reached an agreement that cut more than \$160 million from the DDA budget for FY 2026. It was a difficult road to get to that number, but we believed it was a number that would ensure our services would survive in the short term, until sunnier days when, we hoped, the cuts to our rates would be restored.

Then, on April 2, Governor Moore released a supplemental budget that eliminated an additional \$28.7 million – what was to have been a modest 1% rate increase – from the budgets of all Medicaid provider groups, including DDA Community Services.

With just a couple of days left in the Legislative Session, the General Assembly passed a \$67 billion operating budget for Maryland that is now in the Governor's hands.

The budget plan includes more than \$2.5 billion in spending cuts, along with \$1.6 billion in new or extended taxes and fees, including a new 3% tax on technology services, a 2% tax on capital gains for people with income over \$350K, a 6% tax on vending machine purchases, and increases on recreational cannabis, vehicle excise taxes, and sports wagering. The budget also included two new tax brackets for high-income residents: one for people who make over \$500K annually and another for those with more than \$1 million in annual income to pay more.



BUDGET HIGHLIGHTS

The following information includes details on the funding restorations to both FY25 and FY26, as well as final budget cuts and the structure/nature of the cuts, which are much different than originally proposed.

Fiscal Year 25:

The Governor's FY26 budget initially included a proposed cut of \$194 million, to take place during the last quarter of FY25. Budget leaders from both the House and Senate successfully restored \$152 million of this cut by reallocating funds in partnership with the Governor's administration.



Governor Moore's supplemental budget addressed additional deficit spending by the Developmental Disabilities Administration (DDA) that was not anticipated when the budget was initially proposed. A total of \$277 million was allocated for FY25, with \$143 million sourced from the General Fund and \$134 million from Federal Funds.

Additionally, the Governor reinstated \$5.5 million for the Low-Intensity Support Services (LISS) program, originally proposed for cuts in FY25.

Fiscal Year 26:

For FY26, the allocation for additional deficit spending increased to \$283 million, comprising \$154 million from the General Fund and \$129 million from Federal Funds. This funding is intended to cover ongoing operational costs that were unknown at the time that the FY26 budget was introduced.

Followed by this funding restoration, the Governor's supplemental budget released on April 2 eliminated an additional \$28.7 million in funding, with \$14.4 million sourced from State Funds, and \$14.3 million in lost matching Federal Funds.

Additional budget notes:

- For community providers, **the Geographic Differential Rates will be capped at 10% above the rest of the state rates.**



- The **Dedicated Hour Rate** for Community Living Group Home and for Supported Living will be **decreased from 87% to 86%** of the fully loaded brick. **Budget language was adopted to ensure DDA does not consider shared hours when approving dedicated hours for individuals with specific needs.**



BUDGET HIGHLIGHTS

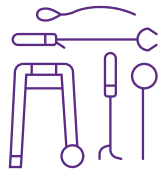
- For **Self-Directed Services** participants, the **Reasonable and Customary Rates** are preserved at the current level of funding, **Wage Exceptions** will be capped at 15% above the maximum Reasonable and Customary Service Rate, and 10% above the standard maximum wage for the Geographic Differential maximum wage.



- For **State-Funded Individuals**, the DDA is directed to ensure people who receive services apply for Medicaid to capture Federal Funds for those eligible for the Medicaid Waiver. The General Assembly acknowledged that there will be a certain number of individuals who need to continue to be supported by DDA with state-only funds.



- The **Low-Intensity Support Services (LISS)** program will continue with an **FY26 funding appropriation of \$2 million dollars**, and **individual grants capped at \$1,000**.



- End the Wait Act funding** was restored in the amount of **\$6 million** (this funding applies to multiple home and community-based waivers in MD, including DDA).



- The **DDA** is mandated to report quarterly on spending for the **Community Services Program**, providing detailed data on enrollment, service utilization, and cost estimates. The first report is due by August 15, 2025. These reporting requirements are designed to enhance transparency and accountability, ensuring that funds are used effectively to meet the needs of our community.



- In addition, a report is due by October 15 from DDA that details all other cost containment actions implemented or planned in FY25 and 26. The report shall include the expected budgetary impacts by fund type, effect on rates and rate setting, timeline and status of implementation, an update on federal approval of any waiver amendment from CMS, and budgetary impact by county for actions related to the geographic differential rates.

BUDGET HIGHLIGHTS

Category	Fiscal Year	General Funds	Federal Funds*	Restoration	Total Restored
First Restoration for FY25	FY25	\$76 Million	\$76 Million	\$152 Million	Total Restored for FY25: \$429 Million
Supplemental Budget Restoration for FY25	FY25	\$143 Million	\$134 Million	\$277 Million	
Supplemental Budget Restoration for FY26	FY26	\$154 Million	\$129 Million	\$283 Million	Total Restored for FY26: \$575.48 Million
Proposed Restoration for FY26	FY26	\$147.24 Million	\$145.24 Million	\$292.48 Million	

*Federal matching funds are estimated for FY26

BRFA Updates:

In the Budget Reconciliation and Financing Act (BRFA), the decisions were that the **DDA may put a cap on Individual and Family Directed Goods and Services (IFDGS)**, but must remove the Day to Day Administrator from IFDGS and put this service in its own service category, as not to be impacted by IFDGS caps.

The DDA will also be allowed to use **Waiting List Equity Funds (WLEF) for FY26 for deficiency spending** and the **proposal to remove the LISS Program from statute was rejected**. LISS will remain a resource and "may" be funded annually depending on availability of state funds. For FY26, that funding is set at \$2 million.



EVENTS

Legislative Calendar Day

The second day of Legislative Session marked one of our biggest annual advocacy events, Legislative Calendar Day! More than 100 advocates from local chapters of The Arc descended upon Annapolis to welcome legislators back and deliver calendars to grateful recipients. This year's calendar theme was **Opening Doors**, highlighting how The Arc and the people we support are taking charge of their futures: creating exciting opportunities for themselves and others.



Throughout the day, attendees held meetings with their representatives to share our legislative session priorities and use the advocacy skills they brushed up on during our Legislative Session Preview two days prior. Each Calendar Day, we strengthen our relationships with our legislative friends and champions and work to move the dial ever forward in our mission to create a world where children and adults with IDD have and enjoy equal rights and opportunities!

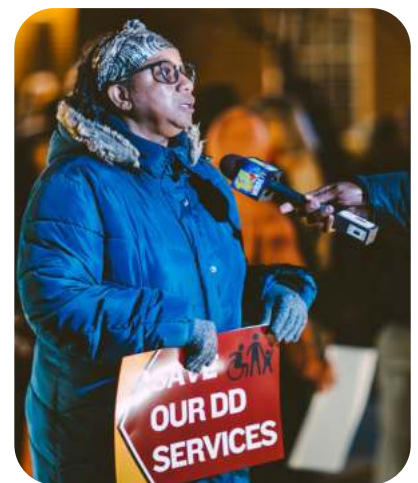


EVENTS

Rally To Save Our DD Services

With just 3 days notice, the Maryland Developmental Disabilities Coalition organized a Save Our DD Services Rally, drawing more than 1,000 advocates to Annapolis, and punctuated by powerful speeches from people with disabilities, parents, legislators, and DD Coalition members. With the well-being of over 18,000 Marylanders with intellectual and developmental disabilities on the line, and budget cuts that would slash 22% of DD Community Services funding, our grassroots showed the Administration and Legislators our undeniable collective advocacy power. The chants of “Save Our DD Services” and “Hey Hey, Ho Ho, These Budget Cuts Have Got To Go” could be heard across the legislative complex throughout the night.

People with developmental disabilities, parents, DD Coalition members, providers, and legislative representative speakers bolstered the crowd on Lawyers Mall, and images and videos splashed across countless media outlets. This showing undoubtedly set the tone for the eventual restoration of close to a billion dollars overall, in FY25 and FY26 budgets. We cannot thank everyone enough for coming out: for showing up and speaking your truths.



EVENTS

DD Day at the Legislature

On February 13th, people with intellectual and developmental disabilities, their families, direct support professionals, provider organization representatives, legislators, and other advocacy partners joined together for Developmental Disabilities Day at the Legislature! The annual advocacy event, sponsored by the Maryland Developmental Disabilities Coalition, drew an attendance of over 1,000 people to Annapolis, with even more online, to learn about our budget crisis, hear from legislative leaders, and review fact sheets on priority legislation to share with their representatives during appointments.

Advocates heard from Lt. Governor Aruna Miller, members of our Senate and House leadership, the Maryland Department of Disabilities, and the Developmental Disabilities Administration.

During the event, we celebrated the honorees of the Together We're Better Inclusive Schools Art Contest! Student honorees, their parents, and representatives from their schools were praised for their works of art with certificates and cash awards for their schools.

Later in the day, advocates endured long wait lines as they entered buildings in the legislative complex to continue advocating.



EVENTS

“These Are Our Lives” Action Night

“These are our lives we are talking about!” These words could not be truer as news outlets and others spoke of deficits and budget projections. The advocates at the center of the action night were all people who would be directly impacted by the proposed Developmental Disabilities Administration budget cuts: **real people** behind the numbers (and from around the state) with developmental disabilities and their direct support professionals.



With organizational support from the Maryland Developmental Disabilities Coalition, more than 100 individuals came to the Maryland House of Delegates with their testimonials, ready to educate and advocate!

Attendees spoke to their representatives and members of the press about their thoughts and fears with the proposed cuts, and how their lives would be impacted. Following that the group traveled down the sidewalk to the statehouse, chanting along the way, and asking members of the General Assembly for their support as members made their way to their Monday evening floor sessions. Once again, we showed our fight would continue: We are relentless in our advocacy and will never back down!



EVENTS

World Down Syndrome Day

The Maryland World Down Syndrome Day (WDS) Coalition is a group of several partner organizations statewide that support individuals with Down syndrome and their families. Leading up to March 21, members of the Coalition gathered in the House and Senate to deliver personalized letters, fact sheets, and mismatched socks to their representatives. Socks are a symbol of Down syndrome because chromosomes, under a microscope, look like socks, and people with Down syndrome have an extra copy of chromosome 21. Mismatched socks are worn to celebrate differences.

On March 21, the 6th Annual WDS Celebration in Annapolis took place, punctuated by speeches on Lawyers Mall: all by advocates with Down syndrome who shared their accomplishments, wishes, and hopes for the future. Following the rally event, many members of the Maryland General Assembly gathered with advocates, family, and friends for a celebration and dance party. We even received a visit from Minnesota Vikings Offensive Lineman, Walter Rouse, who stayed and danced with attendees until the very end of the celebration.

Carol Beatty, Secretary of the Department of Disabilities, presented a proclamation from the Governor during the event, and various legislators stopped by to provide remarks and do a little dancing!



EVENTS

Autism Acceptance Month

The Arc Maryland celebrated Autism Acceptance Day alongside other members of the Maryland Autism Coalition on April 2. The day began with Senate and House floor acknowledgments, and culminated in a visit with the Lieutenant Governor, Aruna Miller. Members of the General Assembly sported Autism Acceptance Day “Infinity” ribbon buttons - symbolic of the infinite possibilities for people with Autism.



Our typical annual Autism Acceptance Day Celebration was postponed in recognition of a celebration at the end of the month, when the Advisory Stakeholder Group on Autism-Related Needs (ASGARN) will release its Strategic Plan.



LEGISLATION

The Arc Maryland actively worked on several important bills this legislative session, in addition to our extensive budget advocacy. We are proud of what our advocacy accomplished, and look forward to continuing work on those initiatives that were priorities, but did not pass this year. The following represents some of our priority legislation. Please check out our Legislative Bill Tracker for Session 2025 on our website for a more extensive list of bills, positions we took, actions, and outcomes.

Priority Legislation that Passed

Community Living & Working

Consumer Protection- Right to Repair- Powered Wheelchairs

HB0031 | Support | Passed

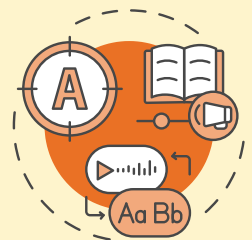
It can often take several months for specialized wheelchairs to be repaired. Repairs can be costly, leaving people without access to a safe and reliable wheelchair. This legislation states that powered wheelchair manufacturers doing business in Maryland must provide essential resources—such as documentation, parts, embedded software, firmware, and tools—needed for wheelchair repairs and updates. Further, this bill compels manufacturers to provide information and parts to people and independent repair providers on fair and reasonable terms. The legislation will ensure that people who use powered wheelchairs have timely repairs and access to their primary means of mobility, alleviating the long wait times and stringent requirements often imposed by manufacturers. This move also aligns Maryland with six other states, including California, Colorado, Massachusetts, Maine, Minnesota, and New York, which have enacted similar “right-to-repair” laws.



Human Services - Maryland Assistive Technology Program - Establishment

SB0208 and HB0214 | Support | Passed

This bill enshrines the functions of the Maryland Assistive Technology Program, better known as MDTAP, into law. This makes the program less vulnerable to “optional” medicaid service cuts. MDTAP, which is part of the Department of Disabilities, provides essential assistive technology devices and services to individuals with disabilities.



Residential Real Property- Local Limits on Summoning Law Enforcement or Emergency Services

SB0125 and HB0249 | Support | Passed

This bill prohibits local jurisdictions from enforcing a local law or ordinance that limits the number of times an individual may summon law enforcement or emergency services to a residential property. It builds upon and closes loopholes to ensure the protections created by legislation from last year.

LEGISLATION

Maryland Disability Service Animal Program- Established

SB0157 and HB0384 | Support | Passed

This legislation establishes the Maryland Disability Service Animal Program in the Department of Disabilities. The Department will select a nonprofit training entity to participate in the Program. It also establishes the Maryland Disability Service Animal Program Fund as a special, nonlapsing fund. Although we still have a way to go before this program may fulfill its intended purpose (greater access for people to service animals), we have a start, this year, with the passage of this legislation.

Maryland Transit Administration - Disability Reduced Fare Program - Renewal for Permanently Disabled Individuals

HB0450 | Support | Passed

This bill requires the Maryland Transit Administration to automatically renew the Disability Reduced Fare Program certification of an enrollee who is permanently disabled. Currently, people with intellectual and developmental disabilities have to renew their Disability Reduced Fare Program authorization every 3 years in Maryland.



This valued discounted ride program offers a 50% discount on fares for people with disabilities, older adults, and Medicare cardholders. People with disabilities are four times more likely to face barriers to accessing safe and affordable transportation, when compared to people without disabilities. By keeping fares affordable and streamlining the renewal process, the bill helps Marylanders with developmental disabilities access the transportation they need without having to go through a lengthy renewal process for a condition that is considered, by medical professionals, to be permanent.

Office of Disability Employment Advancement and Policy and Maryland as a Model Employer Initiative - Established

HB0502 | Support | Passed

This bill establishes the Office of Disability Employment Advancement and Policy within the Department of Disabilities, and establishes the Maryland as a Model Employer Initiative within the Office of Disability Employment Advancement and Policy to facilitate efforts that improve outcomes in the hiring, recruitment, retention, and advancement of people with disabilities in the State government workforce.



This legislation is important because it addresses unemployment and under-employment of people with IDD. According to state data, only 45% of Marylanders with disabilities are employed, compared to 79% of Marylanders without disabilities. Modeled after the State as a Model Employer (SAME) Initiative, it sets a standard for inclusivity, encouraging both public and private sectors to examine and revise their employment practices to create a more diverse and equitable workforce.

Pictured is the bill signing on April 8 for HB0502 with Sharon Dols, deputy executive director of The Arc Maryland.

LEGISLATION

Maryland Developmental Disabilities Administration Waiver Advisory Council – Establishment

HB1244 | Support | Passed

This bill codifies the Maryland Developmental Disabilities Administration Waiver Advisory Council and clarifies its purpose to advise and provide recommendations to the DDA on system design, service delivery, and quality enhancement. The passage of House Bill 1244 represents a large victory for the Maryland Developmental Disabilities Coalition, particularly with the inclusion of The Arc Maryland and the Maryland Association of Community Services (MACS) as named members of the Waiver Advisory Council (WAC).



Additionally, the expansion of membership in the WAC will ensure broader representation and enrich the council's capacity to provide meaningful recommendations to the Developmental Disabilities Administration (DDA). This is crucial for the nearly 18,000 Marylanders who depend on DDA for vital community supports that enable them to live and thrive in their communities. The WAC will include representatives from statewide organizations, along with other partners, and people with lived experience.

Pictured is The Arc Maryland's executive director, Ande Kolp, testifying alongside Developmental Disabilities Coalition members, Rachel London and Laura Howell, and Delegate Michele Guyton, the Sponsor for HB1244.



Vehicle Laws - Licenses, Identification Cards, and Moped Operator's Permits - Notation of Nonapparent Disability (Eric's ID Law)

SB0618 and HB0707 | Support | Passed

This bill requires an original and renewal application for a license/ID to allow an applicant to choose if they want to indicate a nonapparent disability they have. The MVA would include a notation of the nonapparent disability on their license/ID. There is also an immediate implementation of training for law enforcement concerning interactions with persons with nonapparent disabilities.



Both bills were amended to allow people to remove the notation from their ID at any time they would like. The bill is a repeat from last legislative session, but includes several provisions to address previous concerns of The Arc Maryland. Members of the Disability community shall be consulted to determine the symbol that will be employed to represent a nonapparent disability, and there will be collaboration with law enforcement to determine what additional training officers and other first responders may need to respond to calls with sensitivity,

LEGISLATION

Education & Childcare

Public and Nonpublic Schools - Student Elopement - Notice and Reporting Requirements (Ace's Law)

HB1204 | Support | Passed

The passing of this bill addresses the safety and well-being of students with disabilities who exhibit wandering or elopement behaviors. By mandating that schools notify parents or guardians on the same day when a student attempts or accomplishes an elopement, the bill ensures that families are immediately informed and can take necessary actions. Additionally, the bill requires schools and IEP teams to annually review and address wandering and elopement behaviors in a student's individualized education program or behavioral intervention plan to ensure that proactive measures are in place to support the student.



This legislation is particularly important for families with children who have Autism or other intellectual and developmental disabilities, as it provides a structured approach to managing and mitigating the risks associated with wandering. There have been numerous instances where children have eloped from school unnoticed, sometimes traveling significant distances, which underscores the necessity of this bill. This bill will enhance the safety and security of students with disabilities as well as students without disabilities.

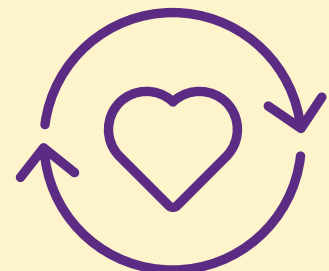
Pictured is Brittany Bledsoe, mother of young "Ace," along with Ande Kolp, executive director of The Arc Maryland, and Delegate Edith Patterson testifying in the Health and Government Operations Committee.



Public Schools- Restorative Practices Schools- Comprehensive Plan

SB0068 and HB0197 | Support | Passed

This bill requires the State Department of Education to develop a comprehensive plan to implement requirements for the establishment of "Restorative Practices" Schools. It also requires county boards of education to use the comprehensive plan if the county board chooses to establish a Restorative Practices School.



LEGISLATION

Therapeutic Child Care Grant Program - Funding - Alterations

SB0359 and HB0185 | Support | Passed

The Therapeutic Child Care Grant Program has been in place for a number of years to subsidize the specialized care needs of children with complex healthcare conditions. There are currently several centers in Maryland that rely on these grant funds to provide nursing and other support services. Approximately 250 children statewide are recipients of Therapeutic Child Care, an important program and service that allows parents to continue to work and support their families.

The grant program sunsetted (funding mandate ended) in FY25. The FY26 budget appropriation is \$1.5 million (a \$2.2 million decrease from FY25 funding levels), however, the legislation restores program funding for FY27-FY29 to FY25 levels.



University of Maryland, College Park Campus- TerpsEXCEED Program Funding

SB0603 and HB0458 | Support | Passed



This bill authorizes the Governor to include in the annual budget bill, beginning in fiscal year 2027, an appropriation of \$350,000 to the University of Maryland, College Park Campus TerpsEXCEED (EXperiencing College through Education and Employment Discovery) Program to provide educational and employment opportunities to students with intellectual disabilities.

Pictured is The Arc Maryland Board Member Hari Kanaan, a graduate of the first TerpsEXCEED class in 2023.

Maryland State Department of Education - Publicly Funded Prekindergarten - Analysis and Report (Mixed Delivery Model Viability Act)

HB1475 | Support with Amendments | Passed

The bill requires the Maryland State Department of Education to convene a work group to conduct an analysis of the mixed delivery, publicly funded prekindergarten system. Part of the charge of the work group will be to look at challenges for public prekindergarten providers in building or adapting facilities to accommodate prekindergarten students and how best to use publicly funded prekindergarten to provide a quality early childhood education for students with and without disabilities together in the same classrooms.

We advocated that the work group membership should have representation from the disability community, but the final passed legislation does not include membership specifically from the disability community.



LEGISLATION

Healthcare

State Government - Grants and Contracts - Reimbursement of Indirect Costs

SB0127 and HB0300 | Support | Passed

This legislation alters the rate at which nonprofit organizations, receiving state-funded grants or contracts, can be reimbursed for indirect costs to match the greater percentage of the rate established under relevant federal guidelines or 15%.

For many years, nonprofits may be held to a maximum indirect allocation of 10%. This limited percentage may make it difficult for nonprofits to properly execute and oversee grant activity, particularly in light of the rising indirect costs of doing business. The bill takes effect immediately upon signing, which is critical for timely FY26 grant applications.

Preserve Telehealth Access Act of 2025

SB0372 and HB0869 | Support | Passed

This bill would extend the period that Medicaid and other health plans would cover telehealth appointments that include audio-only assistance. Without this change in law, reimbursement for this service would end on June 30, 2025. Amendments to SB0372 made the bill bi-partisan and required the Health Care Cost Commission to report every 4 years on advances to telehealth and best practices. Many people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD), and members of the older adult community, rely on telehealth due to transportation and other access barriers. The renewal of the Act provides people with IDD with continued, cost-effective access to medical service.



Public Health - Alzheimer's Disease and Related Dementias - Information on Prevalence and Treatment

SB0748 and HB1004 | Support | Passed

This bill requires the Maryland Department of Health to incorporate information regarding treatments approved by the FDA for Alzheimer's disease and related dementias and to increase understanding and awareness of treatment of Alzheimer's disease and related dementias into relevant public health outreach programs. Amendments were made to include data collection on the higher prevalence of Alzheimer's with people who have Down syndrome.



LEGISLATION

Justice & Civil Rights

State Government - Equal Access to Public Services for Individuals With Limited English Proficiency and Individuals With Disabilities

HB1473 | Support | Passed

This bill alters provisions of law relating to equal access to public services for individuals with limited English proficiency. It also establishes requirements for equal access to public services for State departments, agencies, and programs, including developing a language access plan.



Health Occupations - Implicit Bias and Structural Racism Training

HB1473 | Support | Passed

This bill requires applicants for renewal of certain licenses and certain certificates issued by certain health occupation boards (including the Board of Nursing) to attest that the applicant completed an implicit bias and structural racism training program. The requirement shall only apply to an applicant whose first license or certification renewal occurs after April 1, 2026. The training will be developed and offered using funding from a grant provided to the Maryland Nurses Association to advance antiracism efforts.

Tracked Legislation that Did Not Pass

Community Living & Working

Employed Individuals With Disabilities Program - Upper Age Limit - Prohibition

SB0430 | Support | Did Not Pass

There is currently an age limit of 64 years old to participate in the EID program, which allows individuals with disabilities to work and pay into the program to be covered by Medicaid. This bill would have removed that upper age limit, which would allow people to continue to work and keep their medical assistance through this Medicaid buy-in program, ensuring people can continue to work, earn a living, and continue to have access to the Medicaid support they need for health and safety.



LEGISLATION

Department of Information Technology - Maryland Digital Service - Establishment

SB0242 and HB0221 | Support | Did Not Pass

This bill would have established the Maryland Digital Service within the Department of Information Technology (DOIT) to support improved service delivery to Maryland residents and agency staff through user-centered design, software development, and product management best practices. DOIT is responsible for assisting the US government to prioritize its transition to user-friendly, accessible, and multilingual digital platforms for all Maryland residents to have equitable access to information.

Developmental Disabilities Administration - Self-Directed Services - Parent Providers

HB1053 | Support As Amended | Did Not Pass

This bill would have clarified that a parent of the recipient may provide services for the recipient of self-directed services under certain circumstances. While parents may already be employed, under certain circumstances, by people with IDD who self-direct their services, putting this option in statute would have ensured there would not be changes to DDA policy allowing certain family members to be paid caregivers.



Education & Childcare

Task Force on Education Funding and Student Population Growth

SB0062 | Support with Amendments | Did Not Pass

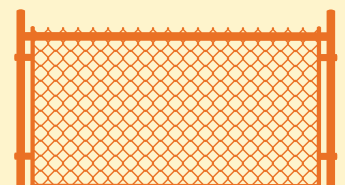
This bill would have established a Task Force on Education Funding and Student Population Growth. We need to ensure there is adequate representation from the Special Education community for any group created to look at school funding and student population growth (future teacher needs).



Task Force to Study Fencing for Bodies of Water and Playgrounds - Established

HB1163 | Support | Did Not Pass

There is an interest amongst parents of loved ones with autism and other community members to develop solutions to keep those who wander safe, including fencing certain bodies of water and playgrounds, but more study is needed. Children with autism are 160 times more likely to drown than other children. Drowning is the leading cause of death for people with autism who wander.



LEGISLATION

Public Schools - Individuals With Disabilities - Main Entrance Accessibility and Emergency Planning

SB0851 and HB0694 | Support | Did Not Pass

This bill would have pushed for equal access for students with physical disabilities to use the same main entrance door as their peers by requiring schools to report on the existence of inaccessible main entrances (defined as those without an ADA door switch and not ADA standard compliant). Schools would have been required to have emergency evacuation plans with equipment on site for evacuating students with physical disabilities during emergencies such as a fire. Many schools have reported that they do not have this equipment. This bill would have required a report for future planning purposes.



Pictured is parent-advocate Adam Wyndham, Executive Director Ande Kolp, and Education Advocacy Committee Co-Chair Lori Scott providing testimony alongside Senator Craig Zucker, SB0851's Bill Sponsor.

Elementary and Secondary Education - Curriculum - Importance of Diversity

HJ0005 | Support | Did Not Pass

This joint resolution would have acknowledged the importance of teaching a culturally diverse curriculum in elementary and secondary schools in the State; providing that curricula taught in elementary and secondary schools should include the history of communities that have experienced discrimination; and affirming the State of Maryland's commitment to a complete education.

The Arc Maryland and the DD Council co-authored testimony to support that the curriculum should embrace diversity and include the history of historically marginalized communities, such as the community of people with IDD, while also highlighting the many important contributions of advocates with IDD to make our world better.

Education - Dependent Children of Service Members - Advance Enrollment Procedures

SB0601 and HB0596 | Support | Did Not Pass

This legislation would have required a county superintendent of schools to allow a child of a service member to advance enroll in a school in the county. It said that Local school systems must coordinate with the parents or guardians of a child with a disability and the school district to prevent a delay in transferring the child.

Public Schools – Water Safety – Instructional Content

HB1127 | Support with Amendment | Did Not Pass

This bill would have required each county school board to develop instructional content on water safety and swimming that is integrated into the school system's health and physical education curriculum. The Education Advocacy Coalition for Students with Disabilities (EAC), a coalition of nearly 50 organizations and individuals of which The Arc Maryland is a member, supported HB1127 with an amendment to make clear that students with disabilities must receive reasonable accommodations if needed to enable them to participate in the water safety and swimming program required by the bill.



LEGISLATION

Justice & Civil Rights

Disparate Impact Election Bills

HB0067, HB0091, and HB0115 | Oppose | Did Not Pass

The Arc Maryland had concerns that these bills would have created a disparate and negative situation for voters with IDD. These bills would have various requirements for voters to have government-issued photo IDs and signature requirements. Some people with disabilities do not have a recognizable or consistent signature due to their conditions and are twice as likely to not have a government-issued state ID, resulting in a higher chance of being denied the right to vote under this legislation.



Criminal Procedure - Out of Court Statements - Vulnerable Adult Victims and Witnesses

SB0298 and HB0677 | Support | Did Not Pass

This bill would have authorized the court to admit into evidence certain out-of-court statements made by a vulnerable adult victim or witness. People with disabilities are particularly vulnerable to crime for a variety of reasons, and while people with disabilities experience the same types of crime as people without disabilities, they may also experience unique forms of these crimes. Justice Department data on sex crimes in 2018 showed that people with intellectual disabilities — women and men — are the victims of sexual assaults at rates more than seven times those for people without disabilities.

Unfortunately, not many of these cases are prosecuted. People with IDD may be able to vividly describe an incident closer to the time of the occurrence of the incident, but over time, the recollection of specific information may become more difficult. This bill would have ensured that statements made outside of the criminal proceeding, by a vulnerable adult victim, may be considered for admission in a criminal proceeding under certain circumstances.

Election Law - Polling Place Procedures - Voting by Elderly Voters and Voters with Disabilities (Accessible and Expedited Voting Act of Maryland)

HB0781 and SB0066 | Support | Did Not Pass

This would have required the State Board of Elections to establish guidelines for the local boards of election to implement a process to expedite voting for elderly voters and voters with disabilities, and accommodate wait times for elderly voters and voters with disabilities at each early voting center and polling place. Local boards would have had to include guidelines on this in the training program for election judges.



LEGISLATION

Criminal Procedure - Incompetency to Stand Trial

HB0312 | Oppose | Withdrawn (Did Not Pass)

This bill would have altered the time period after which a court is required to dismiss a certain charge against a defendant found incompetent to stand trial to the lesser of 10 years or the maximum sentence for the most serious offense charged under certain circumstances.

The Arc Maryland opposed this legislation with the position being that the purpose of Maryland's laws, related to incompetency, are to provide health and restoration services that may permit an individual to be restored to competency so they may stand trial. Much social science research supports a conclusion that a person, previously found incompetent to stand trial (IST), that is not restored to competency within 5 years is not likely to be restored to competency in 10 years. Because individuals in these circumstances have not been determined to be guilty of a crime by the court, it would be inappropriate to extend the period of time they were detained before charges could be dismissed."

Election Law - Curbside Voting - Pilot Program

HB0317 | Support | Did Not Pass

This bill would have established a Curbside Voting Pilot Program to test the viability of curbside voting in the State. It would have also required boards of election to communicate with voters and the general public and include signage at curbside voting locations that curbside voting was prioritized for voters with disabilities. While the bill passed through the House, it unfortunately stalled out in the Senate.



Vulnerable and Senior Adults - Theft of Property by Caregiver, Family Member, or Household Member - Prohibition

SB0466 and HB0604 | Support | Did Not Pass

This bill would have prohibited a caregiver, family member, or household member from knowingly and willfully obtaining the property of an individual they know or reasonably should know is owned by a vulnerable or senior adult with the intent to deprive them of the property. It would have made a violation of the Act an unfair, abusive, or deceptive trade practice that is subject to enforcement and penalties under the Maryland Consumer Protection Act. While HB0604 passed in both the House and Senate, the posture of each bill differed and could not be worked out in time for this bill to pass.

Election Law - Petitions and Ballot Questions - Contents, Plain Language Requirement, and Procedures

SB0615 and HB0816 | Support | Did Not Pass

This bill would have required information on a ballot to be presented in plain language so the public could understand what they were voting for/what their vote would accomplish. What would have been a big step in accessibility for voters with disabilities, this bill ultimately stalled in the House after passage through the Senate.

LEGISLATION

Workgroup on Mail-In Ballot Accessibility

SB0929 and SB1097 | Support | Did Not Pass

This bill would have established a workgroup on Mail-In Ballot Accessibility to examine current processes in the State relating to mail-in ballot return, assessing the impact on voters with disabilities, collecting information about current practices for accessible alternatives to paper mail-in ballot return, and evaluating legal, safe, and privacy-sensitive alternatives for individuals with disabilities. The Arc Maryland would have been one of several workgroup members named in the bill who would examine the accessibility of the ballot return system. Like some of the other voting bills this session, SB0929 stalled in one chamber after passage in another.



Criminal Procedure - Diagnosis of Developmental Disability or Intellectual Disability - Evidence

SB0507 and HB0703 | Support | Did Not Pass

Under existing law, a person's developmental disability can only be considered during sentencing – after they have already been found guilty or entered a guilty plea. This approach fails to account for how developmental disabilities may impact behavior and understanding from the very beginning of legal proceedings. This bill would have allowed evidence of a disability to be considered at the beginning of a case, not just during the sentencing phase.



LEGISLATION

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

HB0940 | Support | Did Not Pass

This bill would have compelled a court to place a defendant with autism or an intellectual disability on probation before judgment (PBJ) under certain circumstances. Research shows that growing numbers of people with autism are getting caught up in the criminal legal system. According to the Autism Society of Maryland, “By age 21, approximately 20% of youth with Autism had been stopped and questioned by police, and nearly 5% had been arrested. An estimated 25% of incarcerated people have autism and/or intellectual/developmental disabilities (IDD).” We had hoped this bill would help prevent the unnecessary incarceration of people with autism while recognizing there may be more effective and appropriate reformative remedies.

Community-Based Residential Facilities - Licensing Entities - Provision of Licensing Criteria and Single Point of Contact

SB0945 and HB1136 | Oppose | Did Not Pass

This bill would have required a licensing authority, on request, to provide to an interested party the criteria used by the licensing authority to determine whether to issue a license for or renew a license of a community facility; and required a licensing authority to designate a single point of contact to respond to complaints, concerns, or issues regarding a community facility, including facilities for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. The DD Coalition expressed concerns to Sponsors that although this language did not specifically violate fair housing, it had the potential to inspire separateness perspectives and discrimination. It was not made clear why existing methods for conflict resolution (for handling neighbor disputes: neighbor to neighbor or engaging code enforcement, for example) could not be used.

We do not need separate procedures for homes solely because they are licensed or certified to provide supported housing for people with disabilities.



Photos throughout this report come courtesy of KO Public Relations, Jennifer Bishop, Elizabeth McKinney De Burgos, members of The Arc Maryland Governmental Affairs Team, and other advocacy partners.

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2025 LEGISLATIVE SESSION BY THE NUMBERS



447th Session of the Maryland General Assembly

47 Senators (34 Democrat, 13 Republican)

141 Delegates (102 Democrat, 39 Republican)

1,380 Senate Bills, Bond Initiatives, and Joint Resolutions

1,901 House Bills, Bond Initiatives, and Joint Resolutions



155 Bills Tracked By The Arc Maryland

106 Positions Taken On Bills

49 Bills Monitored



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