Jan 15 | 8:30 to 9:30 AM

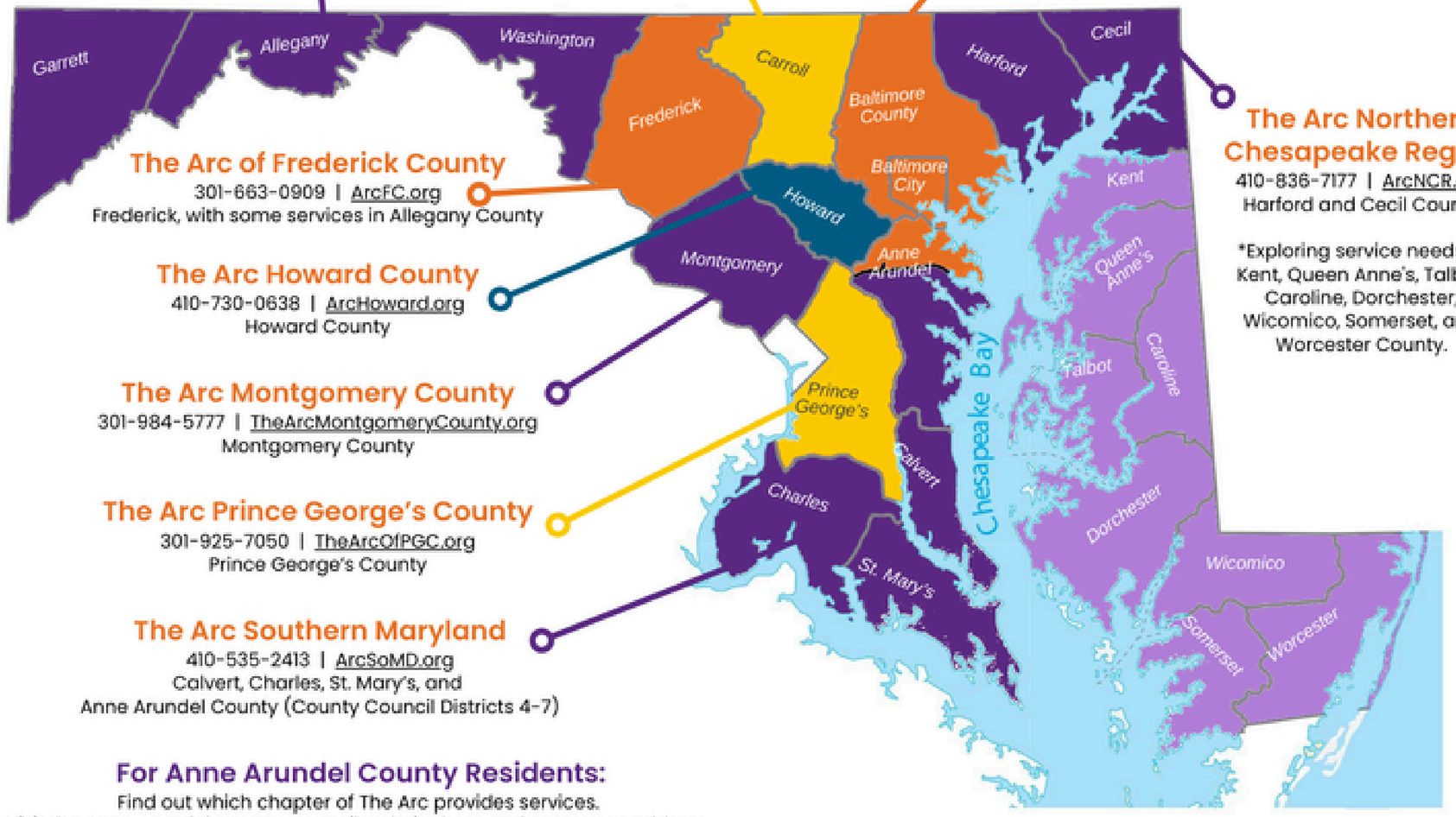
LEGISLATIVE ADVOCACY TRAINING

FOR THE 2026 LEGISLATIVE SESSION

www.TheArcMD.org

The Arc Maryland

The Arc...We Are Limitless



The Arc Washington County
301-733-3550 | ArcWC-MD.org
Washington, Allegany, and Garrett County

The Arc Carroll County
410-848-4124 | ArcCarroll.org
Carroll County

The Arc Baltimore
410-296-2272 | TheArcBaltimore.org
Baltimore City, Baltimore County, and Anne Arundel County (County Council Districts 1,2, and 3)

The Arc Northern Chesapeake Region
410-836-7177 | ArcNCR.org
Harford and Cecil County

*Exploring service needs in Kent, Queen Anne's, Talbot, Caroline, Dorchester, Wicomico, Somerset, and Worcester County.

The Arc of Frederick County
301-663-0909 | ArcFC.org
Frederick, with some services in Allegany County

The Arc Howard County
410-730-0638 | ArcHoward.org
Howard County

The Arc Montgomery County
301-984-5777 | TheArcMontgomeryCounty.org
Montgomery County

The Arc Prince George's County
301-925-7050 | TheArcOfPGC.org
Prince George's County

The Arc Southern Maryland
410-535-2413 | ArcSoMD.org
Calvert, Charles, St. Mary's, and Anne Arundel County (County Council Districts 4-7)

For Anne Arundel County Residents:
Find out which chapter of The Arc provides services.
Visit the Anne Arundel County Council website here and enter your address.

If your County Council District is 1, 2, or 3, contact The Arc Baltimore.
If your Anne Arundel County District is 4, 5, 6, or 7, contact The Arc Southern Maryland.

The Arc Maryland
410-571-9320 | TheArcMD.org
Advocacy and Outreach Services Statewide

Our Mission

The Arc Maryland works to create a world where children and adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) have and enjoy equal rights and opportunities.



The Arc Maryland Team



Ande Kolp
Executive Director



Ronnesha Jackson
Administrative and Operations Coordinator



Sharon Dols
Deputy Executive Director



Luc Chausse
Director of Communications & Engagement



Natalie Dohner
Director of Education Initiatives & Partnerships



Dominique Palmer
Advocacy Specialist

Governmental Affairs

Committee Co-Chairs:



Anthony Zanfordino
Prince George's County

Dorothy Plantz
Howard County



What We Will Cover Today

- The State of the State: Current Environment
- Dates of Interest
- Senate and House Operating Protocols
- The Arc Maryland's Public Policy Platform
- Session Priorities
- Tips for Effective Advocacy during Session
- Where to Go From Here!

The Arc
Maryland

The State of the State



State of the State

1.4 Billion Dollar Deficit addressed by:

Eliminating some existing funding mandates (Governor)

Spending with a lens on affordability, accountability, and opportunity (Speaker of the House)

Living within our means- dipping into some of our reserves, but also trimming expenses to balance the budget (Senate President)

All: No new taxes or fees

State of the State

DDA forecasted to be overspent by $150-200 million in General (State) Funds

($300-400 million in Total Funds (State and Federal Matching Funds)- This is about 10% of the entire DDA budget

Unemployment Insurance Trust Fund

Waste, Fraud, and Abuse

Healthcare and Housing Affordability

Blueprint Funding

DATES OF INTEREST

The Arc Maryland

2026 Dates of Interest

January 14	First Day of Legislative Session
January 15	Advocacy Training In Annapolis
January 15	Legislative Calendar Day for The Arc in Maryland
January 21	Governor’s Draft Budget Due to General Assembly
TBD	Budget Review with the DDA
February 9	Final Day for Senate Bill Introductions
February 13	Final Day for House Bill Introductions
February 18	Developmental Disabilities Day at the Legislature
March 23	Crossover Day
March 20	Word Down Syndrome Day Celebration in Annapolis
April 2	Autism Acceptance Day Celebration in Annapolis
April 13	Sine Die

SENATE & HOUSE PROTOCOLS

The Arc Maryland

Operating Protocols

Committee Bill Hearings

- Bill Hearings in the House and Senate can be attended in-person in Annapolis.
- You can also watch committee hearings live on the MGALeg website under the Meetings tab.
- Go to the meetings for the day, scroll to the committee and click on the camera icon.
- If you missed the live session, just click the camera symbol to watch the video playback.



Operating Protocols

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Ways and Means Committee

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Ways and Means Committee - Bill Hearing
1:00 PM - House Office Building, Room 130, Annapolis, MD

HB0002	Del Griffith	Subtraction Modification - Public Safety Retirement Income
This bill is sponsor only oral testimony.		
HB0098	Del Cardin	Inheritance Tax - Beneficiaries of Limited Means - Installment Payments
This bill is sponsor only oral testimony.		
HB0175	Del Ziegler, et al	Income Tax Credit - Venison Donation - Alterations
This bill is sponsor only oral testimony.		
HB0024	Del Metzgar	County Boards of Education - Volunteer Aides - School Chaplain
This bill is sponsor only oral testimony.		
(Added - 1/13/2026 3:41 PM)		
HB0222	Del Vogel	Educational Institutions - Opioid Overdose-Reversing Medications - Policy Requirements (Naloxone Access Act)
(Jointly assigned to Ways and Means\Appropriations) This bill is sponsor only oral testimony.		
(Added - 1/13/2026 3:41 PM)		
HB0161	Del Ruth, et al	Property Tax Credit - Retail Service Station Conversions
This bill is sponsor only oral testimony.		
(Added - 1/13/2026 3:47 PM)		
HB0211	Del Nawrocki	Baltimore County – Property Tax Credit – Fraternal Order of Police Lodge 34
(Added - 1/13/2026 3:47 PM)		

Providing House Testimony

Witness sign-up in the **House** will be opened online through the Maryland General Assembly website **two business days** before the bill hearing, beginning at 8 AM and open until 6 PM. **House testimony can be done in-person or virtually (live).**

Hearing Date	Witness Sign-Up Date
Monday	Thursday the Week Prior between 8 AM & 6 PM
Tueday	Friday the Week Prior between 8 AM & 6 PM
Wednesday	Monday between 8 AM & 6 PM
Thursday	Tuesday between 8 AM & 6 PM
Friday	Wednesday between 8 AM & 6 PM



Providing Senate Testimony

Witness sign-up in the **Senate** will be opened online through the Maryland General Assembly website **two business days** before the bill hearing, beginning at 8 AM and open until 6 PM. **Senate testimony can be done in-person or virtually (live only - not pre-recorded).**

Hearing Date	Witness Sign-Up Date
Monday	Thursday the Week Prior between 8 AM & 6 PM
Tueday	Friday between 8 AM & 6 PM
Wednesday	Monday between 8 AM & 6 PM
Thursday	Tuesday between 8 AM & 6 PM
Friday	Wednesday between 8 AM & 6 PM

For bills a committee heard and voted unanimously on during the 2025 Session, they will only hear oral testimony from the bill sponsor.

For any other bills that a committee heard during the 2025 Session, committees will hear from two proponents and two opponents.

Providing Testimony

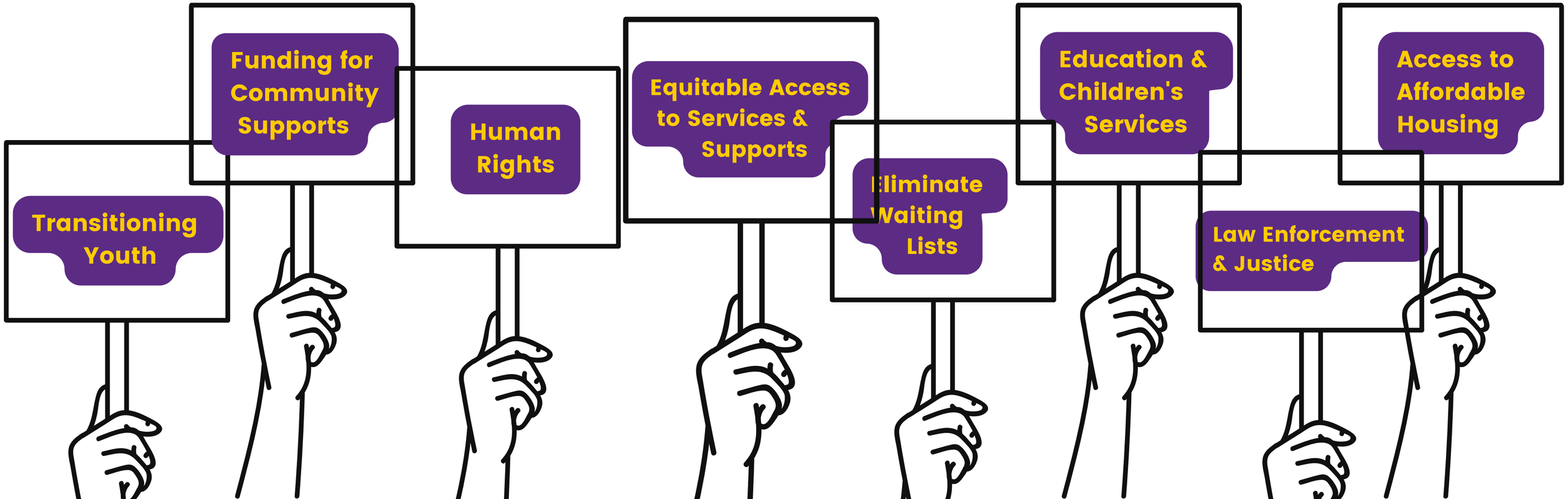
- Testimony is limited to 2 minutes per person.



- In the Senate and the House, the specific bill order will be posted on the Maryland General Assembly website the day before the hearing. If a bill hearing is scheduled for a Monday, the hearing order will post on Friday.

- Because we never know how long each hearing will take, you will sometimes have to wait a while after the scheduled hearing time for your opportunity to provide testimony.

PUBLIC POLICY PLATFORM



SESSION PRIORITIES

The Arc Maryland

The Right to Live in the Community

A bill to enshrine the “Olmstead Act” in state law. Olmstead is the federal act that guarantees people the right to receive their care in the least restrictive environment. It guarantees a person the right to live in the community and not to be held in institutions if their care can be safely and affordably provided in the community. Colorado Legislature passed a similar law last session.

With everything happening on a Federal level (cuts to Medicaid and dismantling/defunding of agencies and departments that protect people with IDD, combined with the continuing issues we are facing in Maryland with people losing their medicaid and waiver services, a lack of timely resolution, and threats to their health and livelihood, we believe this must pass in Maryland. We have Senate and House Sponsors (to be revealed soon).



Protect the DDA Budget and Restore Low Intensity Support Services Funding

A group of stakeholders, known as the MIDSEC, met weekly for several weeks to review data and identify spending trends to try to determine what, if any, efficiencies can be identified for cost containment (cuts). We identified some possible solutions, but each solution would take time and further analysis to ensure people with IDD and their families are not negatively impacted. We also discussed solutions to the equity issues seen between models of care to ensure we continue to have a robust, responsive system of services and supports into the future.

We expect DDA to be in the crosshairs again this session once again, given the potion of the budget needed for Home and Community Based Services, and we are going to need our Grassroots advocacy campaign to hold the line to ensure people with IDD and their families' services and supports remain intact with fair and appropriate funding for needed services in the community

Protect the DDA Budget and Restore Low Intensity Support Services Funding

This past session, LISS funding (state-only funding) was cut from a 5 million dollar appropriation to 2 million. LISS funds have been accessed by families for years as a low cost way to provide assistance to people who are not receiving other waiver services. In some instances, LISS has kept people out of crisis.

LISS grants are capped at $1000 and the open application period for the random selection was only offered once this year, instead of twice as in previous years.

The waiting list is growing again, and now has approximately 4000 people on it (DDA, 10/7/25). LISS helps keep some families out of crisis. We need an increase to the funding appropriation and 2 grant opportunities.

LISS is a Lifeline

Drowning Risk Mediation

71% of deaths related to wandering are caused by drowning.
49% of children with autism wander or elope (an act or instance of leaving, often from a safe area or safe premises).
Autistic children are 160 times more likely to drown than their peers



Previous legislation: Sought to create a task force to look at fencing for certain bodies of water as a preventative measure to prevent accidental drowning incidents. That bill failed but Chair Pena Melnyk asked the State Autism Coordinator to pull together a report of recommendations.

New legislation, sponsored by Delegate Patterson, and Delegate Toles, would raise awareness of wandering and drowning risk, promoting water safety for all, and make swimming lessons part of the school curriculum for all students.

Single Point of Entry AND Safety Evacuation Plan Compliance

Several Maryland Schools in the system do not have a front student entrance that is accessible for students who use wheelchairs, forcing these students to use a separate entrance from their peers.



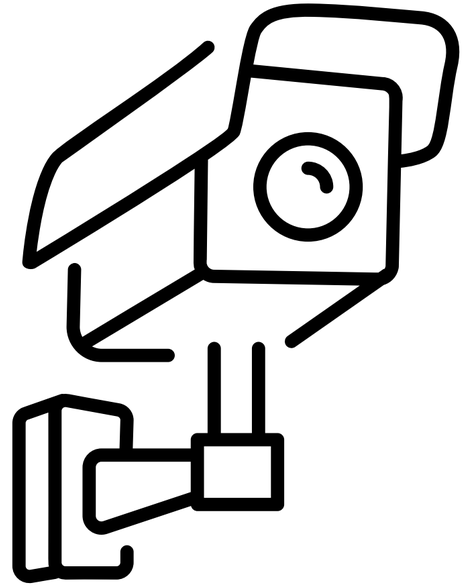
In addition, not all LEAs are compliant with Cassidy's Law, passed in 2017, to ensure all students have an individualized evacuation plan as a part of their IEP, when applicable, AND necessary evacuation equipment onsite. A recent PIA effort revealed it is still in some of the school plans around the state that students with disabilities who use wheelchairs and other specialized equipment, be placed on the top of a stairwell for EMS to locate and evacuate them in the event of a fire.

This bill requires schools to report to the Center for School Safety on their compliance with both of these issues, and develop plans of action for compliance.

Senate Sponsor: Senator Craig Zucker, House Sponsor: Delegate Kaufman

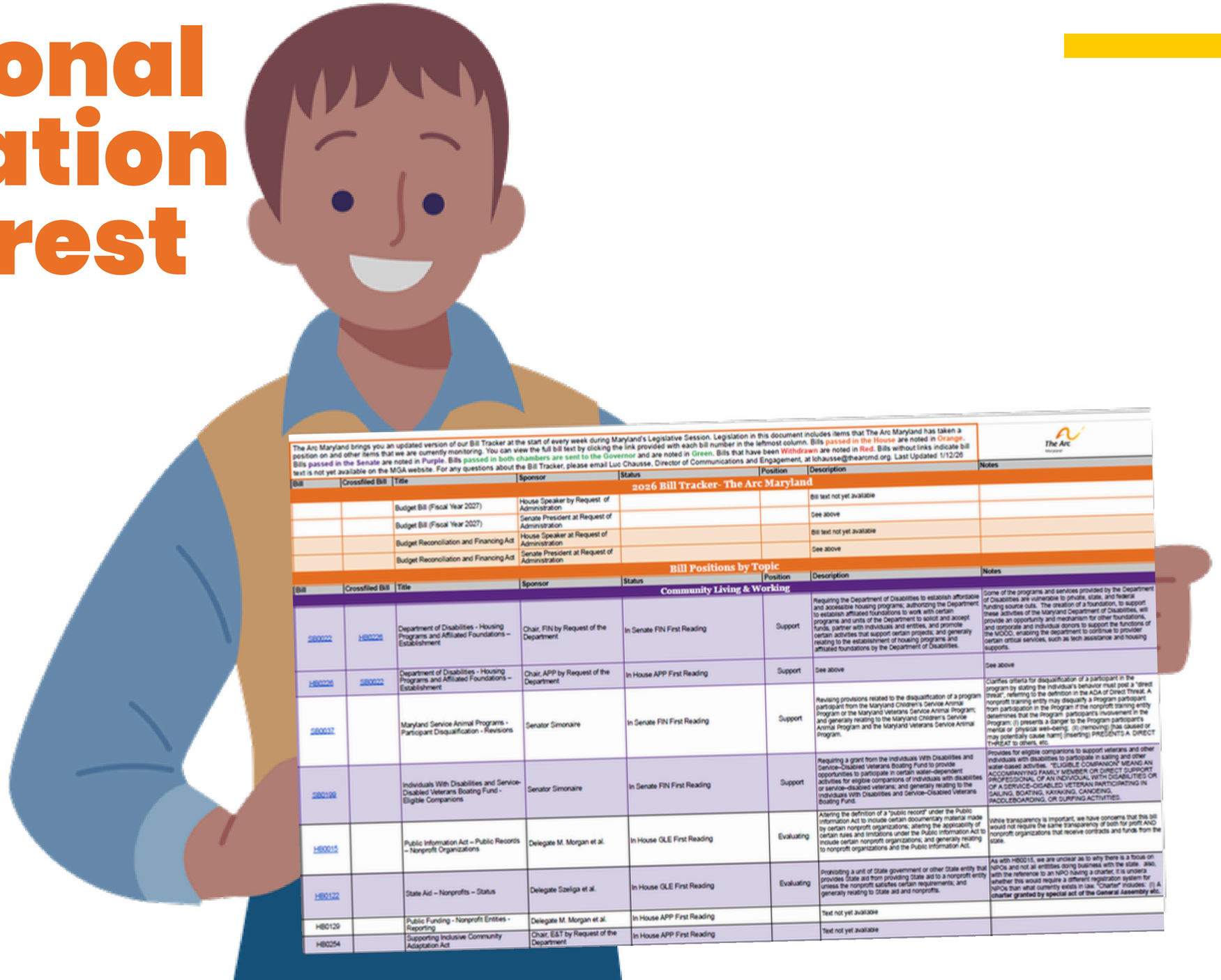
Cameras in Self-Contained Classrooms

On September 19, 2025, the Frederick County Sheriff's Office (FCSO) received a report alleging sexual abuse of a minor involving a Frederick County Public Schools (FCPS) employee. The employee was identified as John McAleer, 22, of Frederick, MD, a Special Education Instructional Assistant at Oakdale Middle School. McAleer was immediately placed on administrative leave by FCPS the same day the report was received. During the course of the investigation, FCSO detectives identified multiple minor students who reported sexual abuse by McAleer that occurred at Oakdale Middle School.



Senator Folden introduced legislation (SB0051) to install video recording devices in self-contained classrooms throughout the state.

Additional Legislation of Interest



The Arc Maryland brings you an updated version of our Bill Tracker at the start of every week during Maryland's Legislative Session. Legislation in this document includes items that The Arc Maryland has taken a position on and other items that we are currently monitoring. You can view the full bill text by clicking the link provided with each bill number in the leftmost column. Bills passed in the House are noted in Orange. Bills passed in the Senate are noted in Purple. Bills passed in both chambers are sent to the Governor and are noted in Green. Bills that have been Withdrawn are noted in Red. Bills without links indicate bill text is not yet available on the MGA website. For any questions about the Bill Tracker, please email Luc Chausse, Director of Communications and Engagement, at lchausse@thearcmd.org. Last Updated: 1/12/26

The Arc

2026 Bill Tracker- The Arc Maryland

Bill	Crossfiled Bill	Title	Sponsor	Status	Position	Description	Notes
		Budget Bill (Fiscal Year 2027)	House Speaker by Request of Administration			Bill text not yet available	
		Budget Bill (Fiscal Year 2027)	Senate President at Request of Administration			See above	
		Budget Reconciliation and Financing Act	House Speaker at Request of Administration			Bill text not yet available	
		Budget Reconciliation and Financing Act	Senate President at Request of Administration			See above	

Bill Positions by Topic

Bill	Crossfiled Bill	Title	Sponsor	Status	Position	Description	Notes
Community Living & Working							
SB0022	HB0026	Department of Disabilities - Housing Programs and Affiliated Foundations – Establishment	Chair, FIN by Request of the Department	In Senate FIN First Reading	Support	Requiring the Department of Disabilities to establish affordable and accessible housing programs; authorizing the Department to establish affiliated foundations to work with certain programs and units of the Department to solicit and accept funds, partner with individuals and entities, and promote certain activities that support certain projects; and generally relating to the establishment of housing programs and affiliated foundations by the Department of Disabilities.	Some of the programs and services provided by the Department of Disabilities are vulnerable to private, state, and federal funding source cuts. The creation of a foundation, to support these activities of the Maryland Department of Disabilities, will provide an opportunity and mechanism for other foundations, and corporate and individual donors to support the functions of the MDOD, enabling the department to continue to provider certain critical services, such as tech assistance and housing supports.
HB0026	SB0022	Department of Disabilities - Housing Programs and Affiliated Foundations – Establishment	Chair, APP by Request of the Department	In House APP First Reading	Support	See above	See above
SB0037		Maryland Service Animal Programs - Participant Disqualification - Revisions	Senator Simonaire	In Senate FIN First Reading	Support	Revising provisions related to the disqualification of a program participant from the Maryland Children's Service Animal Program or the Maryland Veterans Service Animal Program; and generally relating to the Maryland Children's Service Animal Program and the Maryland Veterans Service Animal Program.	Clarifies criteria for disqualification of a participant in the program by stating the individual's behavior must post a "direct threat", referring to the definition in the ADA of Direct Threat. A nonprofit training entity may disqualify a Program participant from participation in the Program if the nonprofit training entity determines that the Program participant's involvement in the Program: (i) presents a danger to the Program participant's mental or physical well-being; (ii) (removing) has caused or may potentially cause harm; (inserting) PRESENTS A DIRECT THREAT to others, etc.
SB0199		Individuals With Disabilities and Service-Disabled Veterans Boating Fund - Eligible Companions	Senator Simonaire	In Senate FIN First Reading	Support	Requiring a grant from the Individuals With Disabilities and Service–Disabled Veterans Boating Fund to provide opportunities to participate in certain water–dependent activities for eligible companions of individuals with disabilities or service–disabled veterans; and generally relating to the Individuals With Disabilities and Service–Disabled Veterans Boating Fund.	Provides for eligible companions to support veterans and other individuals with disabilities to participate in sailing and other water-based activities. "ELIGIBLE COMPANION" MEANS AN ACCOMPANYING FAMILY MEMBER OR DIRECT SUPPORT PROFESSIONAL, OF AN INDIVIDUAL WITH DISABILITIES OR OF A SERVICE–DISABLED VETERAN PARTICIPATING IN SAILING, BOATING, KAYAKING, CANOEING, PADDLEBOARDING, OR SURFING ACTIVITIES.
HB0015		Public Information Act – Public Records – Nonprofit Organizations	Delegate M. Morgan et al.	In House GLE First Reading	Evaluating	Altering the definition of a "public record" under the Public Information Act to include certain documentary material made by certain nonprofit organizations; altering the applicability of certain rules and limitations under the Public Information Act to include certain nonprofit organizations; and generally relating to nonprofit organizations and the Public Information Act.	While transparency is important, we have concerns that this bill would not require the same transparency of both for profit AND nonprofit organizations that receive contracts and funds from the state.
HB0172		State Aid – Nonprofits – Status	Delegate Szeliga et al.	In House GLE First Reading	Evaluating	Prohibiting a unit of State government or other State entity that provides State aid from providing State aid to a nonprofit entity unless the nonprofit satisfies certain requirements; and generally relating to State aid and nonprofits.	As with HB0015, we are unclear as to why there is a focus on NPOs and not all entities doing business with the state. Also, with the reference to an NPO having a charter, it is unclera whether this would require a different registration system for NPOs than what currently exists in law. "Charter" includes: (i) A **charter granted by special act of the General Assembly etc.**
HB0129		Public Funding - Nonprofit Entities - Reporting	Delegate M. Morgan et al.	In House APP First Reading		Text not yet avaiaore	
HB0254		Supporting Inclusive Community Adaptation Act	Chair, E&T by Request of the Department	In House APP First Reading		Text not yet avaiaore	

SPEAKING WITH YOUR REPRESENTATIVES

The Arc Maryland

3 C's of Speaking with Legislators

- Connect
- Context
- Concise



Connect

The best way to get your point across to legislators is to connect on a human level!



Share a personal story about yourself and being honest on how the legislation would affect you or your loved one is a great way to get your point across.

Connecting with your representatives can be done by phone, meeting with them in person, through social media like facebook or x, or by email.

Sometimes, things can get buried in emails. If you have something important to say, calling your legislator’s office can be the best way to communicate it!

You might speak with a staff member instead of your representative - **This is OK!**

Context

Putting things into “context” means giving legislators important background information that they need to make decisions. They may be missing some of the details they need to make good decisions and you might be able to provide that!



Many legislators are part-time - they have other jobs and responsibilities so you cannot assume they will fully understand the issue or your needs unless you explain them fully.

Legislators might have questions for you. Before talking to them, think about what questions they could have and how you would respond!

Concise

There are thousands of bills that your representatives draft, discuss, and vote on during legislative session.

There are also many other people speaking to them about other bills and issues. That can leave legislators with a short amount of time to speak with you.

Use your time with legislators and their staff wisely! Be clear, and quick if possible.

Practice what you want to say and try to say the most important things in the first minute, with supporting information in your second and third minutes with your legislator.

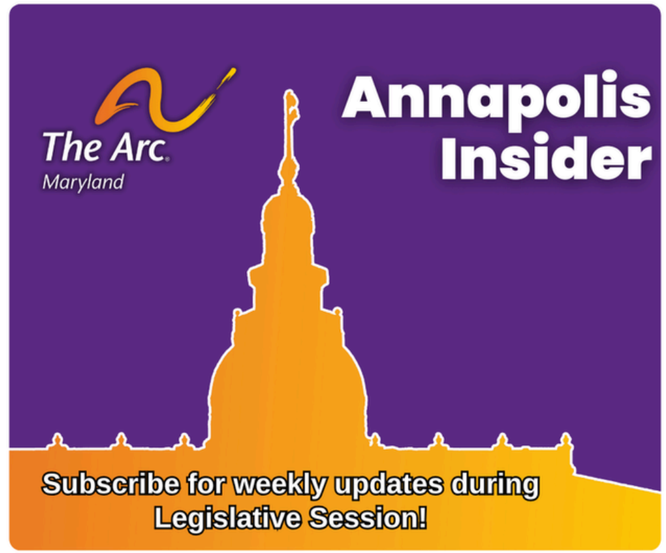


GET INVOLVED
DURING SESSION

The Arc
Maryland

The Annapolis Insider

- The Insider is released every Monday during Legislative Session.
- Each edition includes updates on key legislation, sign-up info for testimony, action alerts to contact representatives, and hearing schedules for the next two weeks for all upcoming bills we are tracking.
- Sign up for the Insider using the QR code here.



The Arc Maryland's Bill Tracker

- Every piece of legislation we follow during session is added to our Bill Tracker.
- Each bill includes:
  - Links to the text and crossfiled bill
  - Bill sponsors
  - Current status of the bill (first readings, hearings, committees, votes, etc.)
  - The Arc Maryland's position
  - Category/Topic of the bill
  - Description of what the bill would do
  - Any additional notes from The Arc Maryland
- The Bill Tracker is included in each edition of the Annapolis Insider.
- Contact Luc at any time for the newest version - I update this daily!

Bill	Crossfiled Bill	Title	Sponsor	Status	Position	Description	Notes
HB0136	SB0299	Education - Public and Nonpublic Schools - Seizure Action Plans (Brynleigh's Act)	Delegates Kerr & Johnson	Passed In House with Amendments (135-0); Passed in Senate with Amendments (46-0); Conference Committee Report Adopted; **Passed Enrolled**	Support	Requiring a county board of education and authorizing a nonpublic school, beginning in the 2023-2024 school year, to require at least two school personnel at the school to be trained in certain seizure recognition and response methods; requiring a public school, beginning in the 2023-2024 school year, to provide training every 2 years to school personnel with direct contact and supervision of students on certain seizure recognition and response methods; providing immunity from civil liability under certain circumstances; etc.	Background: Requires schools to develop Seizu disorders and also requires schools to identify an identification, response, and treatment of seizure Why this is needed: There are approximately 7,3 This amounts to a ratio of roughly 910 students t Education, information, and training on seizure re prepared and can recognize and respond approp experiencing a seizure, thus creating a safer envi public schools. Parents, as critical partners in edu collaboration with school personnel to create a sa seizure condition. 12 states have already passed seizure safe legisl neighbor states Virginia and New Jersey.

Weekly Govt. Affairs Calls

- Every Thursday during Legislative Session at 8:30 AM, The Arc Maryland's Governmental Affairs Committee meets for around 45 minutes:
  - Discuss the latest news on key legislation
  - Determine positions on bills with committee input
  - Address grassroots actions needed.
  - Share information on upcoming events.

- To join our GAC, you must:
  - Subscribe to The Arc's Core Values.
  - Be a member of a Local Chapter of The Arc or an advocacy partner of the state chapter –The Arc Maryland.

Other Emails From The Arc MD

- **Action Alerts**
  - If there is a need for immediate action during session, we will let you know through an action alert! These contain info on the issue at hand, who to contact, and what to include in your communications.
    - Updates on Action Alerts are often included in the following edition of the Annapolis Insider.

- **Upcoming Events**
  - Major events that take place during session may get extra attention! You can get the latest info on DD Day at the Legislature, Celebrations in Annapolis, and Action Nights that may happen.

Thank You For Joining Us!

Next Steps:

Contact Luc Chausse at LChausse@TheArcMD.org to join our Governmental Affairs Committee Weekly Calls.

Sign up for our Annapolis Insider:

We look forward to advocating with you this Legislative Session!

Calendar Distribution Guidelines

Chapter Leads: Go to the back table to collect copies of the calendar for legislators.

Once you collect your materials, please return to a corner or side of the room where fellow chapter members can gather with you before you head out to make deliveries!

Between your visits to the House and Senate, stop by our table on Lawyers Mall to say hello, take pictures for our and your socials, and grab some coffee or hot cocoa!

