

The Arc®
Maryland

2026 Legislative Wrap-Up

TABLE OF CONTENTS

The 2026 Legislative Session....3

Budget Highlights....5

Events....6

Legislative Calendar Day....6

Developmental Disabilities Day at the Legislature....7

"We Can't Go Back" Rally....8

The Buddhist Monks Visit Annapolis to Promote World Peace....9

World Down Syndrome Day....9

Autism Acceptance Day....10

Legislation....10

Priority Legislation We Supported that Passed....11

Community Living & Working....11

Education & Childcare....14

Healthcare....15

Justice & Civil Rights....16

Tracked Legislation that Did Not Pass....18

Community Living & Working....18

Education & Childcare....19

Healthcare....20

Justice & Civil Rights....20

The Arc Maryland 2026 Public Policy Team....23

2026 Legislative Session By the Numbers....23

THE 2026 LEGISLATIVE SESSION

Maryland's 2026 Legislative Session came to a close at midnight on Monday, April 13th. The 90-day session was particularly active and one of the most difficult legislative sessions our community has faced for decades. The pace and tenor of the 2026 session picked up with the release of the Governor's draft budget, containing a proposal to cut the Developmental Disabilities Administration budget by $155.4 million in general funds ($310.8 million total funds with the federal match).

The original proposed cuts:

- Cut Dedicated (1:1) Hours support for people with 1:1 and 2:1 needs.
  - $27.1M General Funds; $54.2M Total Funds
- Cut Self-Directed Reasonable and Customary Rates available for staff wages.
  - $62.2M General Funds; $124.4M Total Funds
- Cut Individual Service Budgets at or over $500K.
  - $66.1M General Funds; $132.2M Total Funds.



Legislative Calendar Day



DD Day at the Legislature

After two and a half months of rallies, meetings, calls, emails, and budget testimonies, the General Assembly and Governor restored a total of $23.1M in General Funds for FY27 and altered the plans for cost containment. The proposal to cap individual budgets at $500K was taken off the table in response to the intense advocacy that this change would result in institutionalization, and the nature of the proposed cuts shifted to include different cuts and cost containment measures, with a final cut of close to $127M in General Funds for DDA Services and Supports.



"These Are Our Lives" Rally During 2026 Developmental Disabilities Day at the Legislature

THE 2026 LEGISLATIVE SESSION (CONTINUED)

Late in the budget process, additional deficit spending in DDA was discovered for the current fiscal year (FY26). Through a Supplemental Budget, an additional $36M in General Funds was restored to DDA to cover that deficit for FY26, along with $2.6M for an independent, outside consultant to review DDA operations in FY27. Language included in the final budget bill requires stakeholder engagement in the analysis of operations, including consultation with people with intellectual and developmental disabilities, their families, providers, the Rate Review Advisory Group, and the Waiver Advisory Council, and requires DDA to submit detailed reports to the Budget Committees on the cost containment actions, beginning in July 2026.



Advocates gather and brave extreme temperatures at the "We Can't Go Back" Rally in March



Addressing Legislators prior to the March Rally



Calendar Day in January

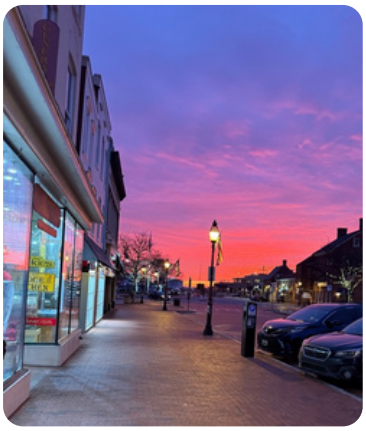
Each Legislative Session is instrumental in shaping the future of our community, and our work is never done. **We will continue our advocacy with the Department of Health & DDA, the Administration, and the General Assembly year-round, so we are ready for what is to come next January.**



The Arc Montgomery County at Calendar Day



Advocates gather together at the "We Can't Go Back" Rally



Sunset in Annapolis

BUDGET HIGHLIGHTS

The final FY 2027 budget for the Developmental Disabilities Administration (DDA) includes $126.9M in general fund cuts to DDA that will impact every person who receives services, regardless of the model through which they choose to access their services and supports.

The following cost-containment measures were adopted:

- Reduce the reasonable and customary wages for family as staff.
- Reduce the reasonable and customary wages for non-family staff.
- Eliminate the reasonable and customary wages for unlicensed vendors with some exceptions.
- Implement a 60/40 hourly cap on family as staff per week.
- Eliminate the wage exception process that allows participants to request wages for staff higher than the reasonable and customary wages.
- Reduce Dedicated Hour authorization and utilization (1:1 and 2:1 support).
- Cut Support Services rates to 100% (Personal Supports, Behavioral Supports, etc.).
- Reduce Community Service rates by 2% for providers and coordinators of community service agencies.



The Arc Prince George's County at the House Budget Hearing



Morning in Annapolis



Senate Budget Hearing with members of the DD Coalition

With the implementation of the cuts, DDA is required to submit detailed reports to the General Assembly budget committees in October, and then monthly thereafter. The reports must include information on the impact of the cuts on people with IDD and their families. Specifically, the reports must include:

- The number of people impacted by each cost containment action.
- Timelines and status of the implementation of each action.
- Spending and cost estimates to track "savings."
- Impacts of the implementation of cuts to staff wages.
- Implementation and impacts of cuts to long-term services and supports (LTSS) rates.
- Implementation and enforcement of the cuts to dedicated hours (described as an "enforcement of the Dedicated Hours policy").
- Medicaid waiver enrollment and waiver operations.
- Medicaid disenrollment trends, and reasons for disenrollment and Medicaid coverage loss.



EVENTS

Legislative Calendar Day

The second day of the session marked another stellar Legislative Calendar Day, one of our largest annual advocacy events for people connected to The Arc in Maryland. Over 150 advocates from local chapters of The Arc spent the morning in Annapolis to welcome legislators back and deliver calendars to grateful recipients. This year's calendar theme is "Limitless"; a reflection of how we see people with intellectual and developmental disabilities, their families, and the communities we build together.



The Arc Maryland Team on Lawyers Mall



The Arc Baltimore at the House Building



The Arc Southern Maryland in the Senate

We kicked off the morning with a legislative session preview and grassroots advocacy training where attendees shared information on session priorities. Throughout the remainder of the day, attendees met with their representatives and staff to share their stories, hopes, and goals for the session, hand-deliver calendars, and strengthen connections.



The Arc Prince George's County on Calendar Day



The Arc Carroll County greets Delegates on Lawyers Mall



The Arc Maryland greets Senators on Lawyers Mall



"New Hope for All" leader, Tavon Jackson poses with the calendar he is featured in!

EVENTS

DD Day at the Legislature

On February 18th, people with intellectual and developmental disabilities, their families, Direct Support Professionals, provider organization representatives, legislators, and other Disability Rights and advocacy partners joined together for Developmental Disabilities Day at the Legislature! The annual advocacy event, sponsored by the Maryland Developmental Disabilities Coalition, once again drew attendance of over 1,000 people to Annapolis, with more watching online, via live stream, to learn more about proposed budget cuts and impacts, hear from Legislative leaders, and review priority legislation fact sheets to share with their representatives during appointments.



DD Day at the Legislature 2026



Delegate Kaufman addresses attendees at DD Day



Together We're Better Awards





DD Day Attendees

The Maryland Department of Disabilities Secretary, Carol Beatty, was also in attendance to share greetings from the Administration. The Maryland Department of Health Secretary, Meena Seshemani, and Deputy Secretary of the Developmental Disabilities Administration, Marlana Hutchinson, also provided remarks. The event concluded with a celebration of the 2026 honorees of the "Together We're Better" Inclusive Schools Art Contest with the Maryland State Department of Education, student honorees, parents, educators and other school representatives.











DD Day "These are Our Lives" Rally attendees and speakers on Lawyers Mall

At the conclusion of the morning program, advocates marched down the street to Lawyers Mall in front of the State House for a rally to save our DD services. The *These Are Our Lives* Rally included stories told by advocates who asked members of the General Assembly to remember that the 19,000 people in Maryland who receive DDA services and supports are people with real needs and dreams who were depending on them to do the right thing. Speeches focused on how people utilize DDA supports to live, learn, and work in their communities.

EVENTS

“We Can’t Go Back” Rally



With continuing conversations, but no indication of movement on the budget, we returned to Annapolis on March 12th for a second rally. Advocates united to share stories of the detriment the proposed cuts would bring to their lives: impacts to their health, their ability to work, and the threats posed by the cuts to their community access. People visited the State House to address legislators prior to the Floor sessions, delivered letters to offices, and then joined together on Lawyers Mall. As the weather took a turn, bringing freezing rain, sleet, and bitterly cold temperatures, advocates were undeterred. The weather was no match for the suffering and fear advocates had felt since the release of the proposed cuts of more than $150 million proposed to the DDA budget ($300 million total funds).









“We Can’t Go Back” rally attendees and speakers on Lawyers Mall

Despite the conditions, advocates were undeterred. Rally speakers like Danielle Bustos, The Arc Maryland Vice President and father,Tony Zanfordino and parent, Grace Williams emphasized the damage cuts would do to their lives and the lives of people they love.







“We Can’t Go Back” Rally attendees and speakers on Lawyers Mall

The day following the Rally, the Senate Budget and Taxation Committee rendered their decisions. The overall cuts were reduced by $23.1 million in general funds ($46.2 million in total funds) to the DDA, reducing the overall cut to cost to $127 million. The committee rejected the Governor's original proposal to cap individual budgets at $500K, which advocates feared would have forced some Marylanders with IDD into institutional care settings. The Senate Budget Committee also added Budget Language, requiring several reports from DDA on the impact of the cuts, more frequent funding projections, protections against additional cuts to Dedicated Hours beyond what was included in the bill, and a restriction on cuts to “State Only” funding that some people rely on for support.

EVENTS

The Buddhist Monks Visit Annapolis to Promote World Peace



A crowd gathers around the Buddhist Monks on Lawyers Mall

On a chilly day in February, nineteen Buddhist Monks brought their 2,300-mile "Walk for Peace" to Annapolis and the Maryland General Assembly. The Monks' message was simple: Society has "abandoned calm in favor of chaos, and simplicity in favor of materialism." They advised that if every person embraced mindfulness every day, the world might find peace. "Mindfulness is something that has been missing for a long time in this nation and in this world," one of the Monks exclaimed, "We are way too busy chasing the outside world, chasing the material, and everything else. We try to chase the world. And that is why we suffer."

The visit from the Monks and their trusty travel companion dog, Aloka, brought over 10,000 people to the State capital and provided a much-needed pause and opportunity for reflection on the chaos and pain many of us were feeling to that point.

World Down Syndrome Day



Stormie and his father, Board Member, Tony Zanfordino with MDOD Secretary Carol Beatty

The Maryland World Down Syndrome Day (WDSD) Coalition is a group of statewide partner organizations that support individuals with Down syndrome and their families. The official day for the worldwide celebration is March 21st, but with the 21st being close to Maryland's Legislative Session Cross-over day this year, the Coalition marked our 7th annual celebration with the General Assembly and the Governor's office on March 19th.



The Arc Maryland Board Member, Hari Kannan with Parents

The festivities began earlier in the week with the delivery of mismatched socks, fact sheets, and personalized letters for legislators. Early in the day on March 19th, advocates and their families were honored on the House and Senate Floors, and then held an "*I Belong* Rally" on Lawyers Mall with a lineup of speakers with Down syndrome who shared their accomplishments, wishes, and hopes for the future. Following the rally, many members of the Maryland General Assembly gathered with advocates, family, and friends for a celebration and dance party at St. Anne's Parish Hall and revelers received a proclamation from the Governor recognizing World Down Syndrome Day. Thank you to all who celebrated with us!







World Down Syndrome Day Festivities in Annapolis

EVENTS

Autism Acceptance Day



Maryland Senate Floor Autism Acceptance Day Announcement

The Arc Maryland celebrated Autism Acceptance Day alongside our fellow Maryland Autism Coalition members on April 2nd in Annapolis. Senate and House members sported Autism Acceptance Day “Affinity” Ribbon buttons, symbolic of the infinite possibilities for people with Autism. The buttons, with fact sheets and resource materials developed by the Coalition, were delivered to members in the days leading up to the event.

Autism Acceptance Day in Annapolis was recognized by both Chambers during their floor sessions, with proclamations provided by Senator Jeff Waldstreicher and Delegate Kym Taylor.



Marylad Autism Coalition Members with Senator Waldstreicher



Delegate Taylor with Jackson DeCarlo

LEGISLATION

The Arc Maryland Public Policy Team was active in Annapolis: driving and following several bills this legislative session, ranging from priority legislation to other bills with implications for people with developmental disabilities, their families, and community providers. Our most pressing issue this session was the Maryland Budget: educating and advocating for alternatives to the proposed cuts to Developmental Disabilities funding. Over the 90-day session, we experienced both disappointments and successes achieved along the way as one of the mightiest grassroots advocacy networks in the state. We look forward to continuing work on our priority initiatives, including the implementation of the *Protecting Marylanders with Disabilities Act* in the coming months.



The following pages provide brief overviews of some of the bills we followed. Please check out our Legislative Bill Tracker for the 2026 Session on our website for a more extensive list of bills, positions we took, actions, and outcomes.

LEGISLATION

Priority Legislation that Passed

Community Living & Working

Department of Disabilities - Housing Programs and Affiliated Foundations – Establishment

SB0022 and HB0226 | Support | Passed

This bill authorizes the Maryland Department of Disabilities (MDOD) to establish affiliated foundations to work with department programs to solicit and accept funds, partner with individuals and entities, and promote activities that support their projects. Because some of the programs and services provided by the Department of Disabilities are reliant on private, state, and federal funding sources, the creation of a foundation, to support the activities of the MDOD, will provide an opportunity and mechanism for the diversification of revenue streams to the department. This will enable other foundations, corporate donors, and individual donors to support the functions of the MDOD so the department can continue to provide certain critical services, such as technology assistance and housing supports without vulnerability to funding cuts.

Maryland Service Animal Programs - Participant Disqualification - Revisions

SB0037 | Support | Passed



This legislation clarifies the criteria for disqualification of a participant in the program by stating the individual's disqualifying behavior must pose a "direct threat" to an other. The terminology aligns with the ADA term and definition 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 presents a danger to the Program participant's mental or physical well–being, or presents a direct threat to others.

Individuals With Disabilities and Service-Disabled Veterans Boating Fund - Eligible Companions

SB0199 | Support | Passed



This bill provides for veterans and other individuals with disabilities to participate in sailing and other water-based activities with an *eligible companion*, defined as an "accompanying family member or direct support professional of an individual with disabilities or a service-disabled veteran participating in sailing, boating, kayaking, canoeing, paddleboarding, or surfing activities."

LEGISLATION

Landlord and Tenant - Discrimination in Housing for Income-Based Housing Subsidies and Positive Rental History Reporting

SB0335 and HB0315 | Support | Passed

The legislation aims to address “source of income” discrimination that, despite existing fair housing law, continues and disparately impacts people with IDD who often have Social Security benefits and may need housing subsidies to live. This bill also ensures that a prospective tenant’s credit score, or lack thereof, may not be the used as a basis for application rejection.

Fair Housing and Housing Discrimination - Regulations, Intent, and Discriminatory Effect

HB0573 | Support | Passed

This bill clarifies what is meant by “discriminatory effect” to remove the requirement that discrimination be proven *intentional* for protections under the law. If the act has a discriminatory effect on a protected class, it is considered discrimination under this interpretation as codified through this bill.

Developmental Disabilities Services - Expedited Eligibility Determinations for Recently Relocated Individuals (Ralph's Act)

HB1015 | Support | Passed

This bill requires an expedited developmental disability eligibility determination for a person with intellectual and developmental disabilities who relocates to Maryland upon the death or incapacitation of a primary caregiver in another state.



“Ralph’s Act” advocates with Senator Waldstreicher pose after the Senate crossfile hearing

To be eligible for the expedited consideration, a person must have received home and community-based developmental disabilities services in another state for at least 10 years, and must be moving to Maryland to live with a family member who will serve as their primary caregiver and who has lived in the state for at least 2 years. The person would be eligible to apply for and receive a disability eligibility decision for services in Maryland, and upon moving, would receive a medicaid eligibility decision within 60 business days. If found eligible, the person would be placed on the Crisis Resolution category of the DDA Waiting List.

When a person loses a parent or other primary caregiver in another state, and has no one else nearby to provide care, it can be traumatic. In these rare and urgent situations, the narrow window created by this bill will ensure people have continuity of care and support.



HB1015 passes unanimously in the House

LEGISLATION

Maryland Medical Assistance Program and Developmental Disabilities Administration - Home- and Community-Based Services Eligibility Determinations (Maryland Protecting People With Disabilities Act)

SB0742 | Support | Passed

Over the past two years, too many Marylanders with intellectual and developmental disabilities have lost Medicaid and waiver services during the State's redetermination process—not because they were ineligible, but because of administrative delays, backlogs, missing paperwork, or inaccessible communication. The consequences are real: loss of critical supports and increased risk of institutionalization.

Late summer 2025, The Arc Maryland's Governmental Affairs Committee identified this as a top priority. It became clear that after enduring these disenrollments, a legislative remedy was necessary. Working with champions in the General Assembly: Senator Craig Zucker, Senator Guy Guzzone, and Delegate Sarah Wolek, and Maryland Developmental Disabilities Coalition Partners, we developed SB0742 / HB1445, the "Maryland Protecting People With Disabilities Act". In the final hours of the last day of session, SB0742 passed.

This law ensures Marylanders are not improperly disenrolled, due to process failures, by requiring timely eligibility determinations, "ex parte" renewals, accessible notice, and continuity of services with timely appeals. At its core, it reflects the promise of Olmstead v. L.C.: people with disabilities have the right to live and receive services in the most integrated setting appropriate to their needs.

We are deeply grateful to our bill sponsors and the many advocates who made this possible through sharing your stories, testifying in hearings on these bills, following up with phone calls and emails, and never losing hope.



Ande Kolp testifies in the House on HB1445



Advocates after the SB0742 Hearing in Finance Committee

LEGISLATION

Police Training - Autism and Dementia (LEAD Act of 2026)

SB0745 and HB0634 | Support with Amendment | Passed

This legislation requires the Maryland Police Training and Standards Commission to require entrance-level and in-service police training to include certain training regarding individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities, dementia, and autism. Our amendment to include training for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities was adopted.

Education & Childcare

Workgroup for the Deaf, Deafblind, and Hard of Hearing - Extension

HB0866 | Support | Passed

Maryland's Workgroup for the Deaf, Deafblind, and Hard of Hearing plays a critical role in making recommendations for specialized case management services. They also study and assess programs that support educational, employment, health, and social opportunities for individuals. Their recommendations help identify barriers to communication access to improve the quality of life for individuals in the community. This bill extends the deadline for the report of findings and recommendations from the Workgroup to December 1, 2028, and extends the termination date for the Workgroup to December 31, 2028.

Public Schools - Individuals With Disabilities - Accessibility and Emergency Planning

SB0507 and HB0311 | Support | Passed

This bill requires each local school system to identify, in its regular safety evaluation, issues of accessibility for individuals with disabilities. The local school systems would have to include in their annual reporting, the instances in which a public school facility became inaccessible for a student with a disability in a manner that could impede evacuations or emergency response, and develop plans to ensure ADA compliance.



HB0311 Bill Sponsor Delegate Kaufman with Lori Scott, Ande Kolp, and POG Director Mat Rice



Ande Kolp and Mat Rice provides testimony with SB0507 Bill Sponsor Senator Zucker

LEGISLATION

Local School Systems - Educator Screening - Educator Identification Clearinghouse (School Personnel Vetting and Hiring Transparency Act)

SB0648 and HB0856 | Support | Passed



This bill requires the Maryland State Department of Education to register each local school system in the State as an associate member of a certain national membership organization; and requiring each local school system in the State to utilize the Educator Identification Clearinghouse to screen individuals who receive an offer of employment for an educator position that requires a license and ensure that each individual who receives an offer applies for and obtains the appropriate license before certain occurrences.

Healthcare

Health Occupations - Criminal History Records Checks

SB0806 and HB1420 | Monitor | Passed



This bill requires Criminal Justice Information Services (CJIS) checks for multiple healthcare occupations. This bill had a lot of support from the healthcare community to provide basic assurances for health and safety.

With the passage of this legislation, criminal history records checks will be standardized similarly to how health occupations are managed and overseen in neighboring states.

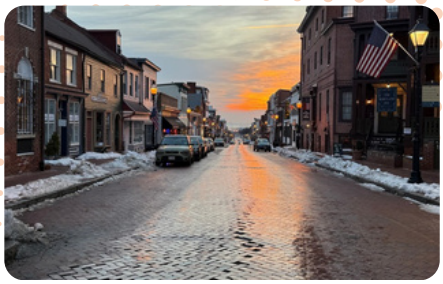
The legislation is significant because it changes expectations for how DDA community providers and people who self-direct conduct background investigations when their direct support professionals are Medication Technicians or Certified Nursing Assistants. The effective date of the legislation is June 1, 2026, and advocates are seeking additional information from the Maryland Department of Health regarding a possible implementation pathway.



Parent Laura Hatcher at "These Are Our Lives" Rally



An advocate with his mother attend Advocacy Night for Community Providers in the House Building

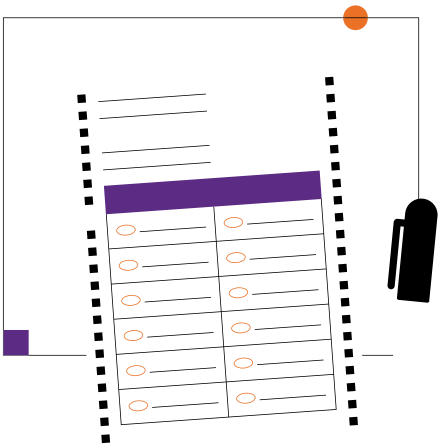


A chilly morning on the streets of Annapolis

LEGISLATION

Justice & Civil Rights

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



SB0029 | Support | Passed

This bill requires ballot questions and descriptions to appear in plain language, and for proposed measures to be provided to the public at least 90 days before elections for optimal consideration. This bill was introduced during the 2025 session, but stalled and passed this year with additional support from advocates.

Election Law - Early Voting Centers - Bus Stops



SB0100 and HB0263 | Support | Passed

This bill requires county and municipal corporation buses to embark and disembark at the entrance of early voting centers located within one-half mile of the route. This will create opportunities for voters who do not drive or own a vehicle to have greater access to voting.

Criminal Law - Benefits Exploitation



SB0140 and HB0216 | Support | Passed

Benefits exploitation (or benefits trafficking) is a national problem, and several states have passed similar legislation to protect older adults and people with disabilities who rely on public benefits and may be vulnerable to this type of abuse.

This bill prohibits a person from knowingly recruiting, harboring, transporting, or obtaining an individual for the purpose of obtaining their government benefits through deception, coercion, exploitation, isolation, or any other means.

It also establishes that a violation of the Act is a felony.

LEGISLATION

Petition for Guardianship of the Property of Alleged Disabled Person - Stay of Civil Actions and Proceedings

HB0426 | Support | Passed

There have been instances in Maryland, where patients could not be transferred to an appropriate post-acute setting due to a financial issue, including a lack of access to their bank account and other assets. These barriers can delay a patient from receiving necessary care. This legislation delays any actions against a patient's personal property until a guardian (if warranted) is appointed, giving the patient time and opportunity to retain their assets while the guardianship petition is considered in the judicial system.

Fiduciary Institutions - Exploitation of Seniors and Vulnerable Adults - Protections and Required Referral (Vulnerable Adult Banking Protection Act)

SB0753 and HB1008 | Support | Passed



This bill creates a safeguard to prevent the financial exploitation of older adults and people with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

It authorizes banks, under certain circumstances, to delay or deny a disbursement from the account of an "eligible adult" or the account on which a certain individual is a beneficiary if the fiduciary institution reasonably believes that the requested disbursement may result in the financial exploitation of the eligible adult. An eligible adult is defined as a person who is at least 65 years old or is a "vulnerable adult".

It requires the bank, under these circumstances, to provide certain financial records and notices, within four business days, to certain entities, authorizes the bank to contact a trusted contact of the individual, and ensures banks have immunity from certain liability for actions taken in good faith.



A crowd gathers in the State House after the "We Won't Go Back" Rally



Speaking to the crowd on World Down Syndrome Day



Advocates chant during the "These Are Our Lives" Rally

LEGISLATION

Tracked Legislation that Did Not Pass

Community Living & Working

Developmental Disabilities Administration - Self-Directed Services Manual - Public Comment

SB0583 and HB1593 | Support with Amendments | Did Not Pass



This bill would have required the Deputy Secretary for Developmental Disabilities to provide notice to the public before making changes to the Self-Directed Services Manual, requiring the Deputy Secretary to receive and consider comments on the proposed changes from the public for at least 90 days after the date on which the notice is provided. The Deputy Secretary could not adopt the proposed changes until the public comment period had ended.

Given the magnitude of the changes to policy, procedures, guidance, and waivers over the past few years, with varied opportunities for public review and comment and limited time to evaluate consequences of changes and provide feedback for support, opposition, or alternatives, we supported the intention of the bill to impose notice requirements.

The DD Coalition's proposed amendments would have expanded the notice requirement to all policies, procedures, guides, regulations and waivers impacting people receiving DDA services, regardless of service model, and would have required DDA to provide a plain language version of all changes to stakeholders for their consideration of proposed changes.

The bill was significantly amended in the House and did not come out of the Senate Committee to which it was assigned.

Maryland Transit Administration – Fixed Route Transit Services - Announcements

HB0733 | Support | Did Not Pass

This bill would have required the Maryland Transit Administration to provide real-time audible and text-based announcements for all stops, and other critical information on fixed-route transit services.

Reliable and effective transportation is crucial for people with disabilities to participate in various aspects of daily life. The availability and accessibility of public transportation continues to serve as a significant barrier for people with disabilities to access and participate in employment, education, healthcare, and other community and social activities.

This bill stalled in the House Environment and Transportation Committee after the hearing.

LEGISLATION

Transportation – Paratransit Services – Interjurisdictional Routes

HB0058 | Support | Did Not Pass



This bill would have required a county that submits an application to the Secretary of Transportation for funding for certain transportation services to identify interjurisdictional paratransit service routes in the application. The Secretary would then have to adopt procedures to ensure counties cooperated in establishing the interjurisdictional paratransit service routes. We supported the bill as it sought to expand interjurisdictional transportation availability for people with disabilities, to address equity and access to critical healthcare services.

Education & Childcare

Public Schools - Self-Contained Special Education Classrooms - Use of Video Recording Devices

SB0051 | *Support* | *Did Not Pass*

This bill would have required the installation of at least one video recording device in each self-contained special education classroom by the beginning of the 2026-27 school year. Access to video has the potential to protect some children with disabilities and would enable parents to understand what may have occurred during the school day, particularly when, because of young age, trauma, or disability, their children are unable to share details of their day.

Previous versions of this bill were introduced and did not pass. Amendments developed for a previous version of this legislation included a critical section that would disallow the surveillance of educators through these cameras and would ensure video footage was not used as a basis for alternative school placement. Unfortunately, these critical sections were missing from the 2026 version of the bill. The Arc Maryland advocated support with amendments to include these safeguards, but the bill did not advance, primarily due to the fiscal note.



Parents Lori Scott and Dustin Bane after the SB0051 Hearing in the Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

Public Schools - Water Safety and Swimming Course - Established

HB0073 | Support | Did Not Pass



This legislation would have required the State Board of Education to develop curriculum content standards for a course on water safety and swimming for public school students in certain grades. It also would have required the provision of reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities to participate. Many states have introduced bills to have this educational requirement, including Minnesota, New York, and New Jersey.

LEGISLATION

Elementary and Secondary Education - Curriculum - Importance of Diversity

HJ0003 | Support | Did Not Pass

This House 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.

This was a repeat of legislation from last session, for which The Arc Maryland and DD Council co-authored testimony to support that curricula should embrace diversity and include the history of marginalized communities, including people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. We emphasized that it should highlight the many important contributions of advocates with IDD to make our world better (Section 504, IDEA, the ADA, etc.).

Task Force on Proactive Review of Audio and Video Recordings on Special Education Buses

HB0649 | Support | Did Not Pass

This legislation would have established a Task Force on Proactive Review of Audio and Video Recordings on Special Education Buses to study the use of artificial intelligence to proactively review audio and video recordings from special education buses to ensure the safety and security of student passengers and report its findings to Legislative Committees.

A graduate of the Maryland Partners in Policymaking® program helped inform the development of this bill that would pilot the use of technology to review school bus footage. Currently, the footage is only reviewed after an incident or allegation of abuse. The need for this bill was highlighted by recent incidents that occurred on school buses that transport children who do not use words to communicate.



An attentive crowd listening to presenters at DD Day at the Legislature



A typical evening in Annapolis



Making calendar deliveries at the start of session

LEGISLATION

Healthcare

Office of Health Care Quality Stakeholder Advisory Council - Establishment

SB0240 and HB0965 | Support | Did Not Pass

This bill would have established an Office of Health Care Quality Stakeholder Advisory Council to provide feedback to the Office of Health Care Quality (OHCQ) regarding the oversight of health care facilities, and to notify the Secretary of Health if OHCQ was negligent in providing oversight of health care facilities.

For the last decade, audits of the Office of Health Care Quality (OHCQ) have repeatedly identified lagging oversight of Maryland's health care facilities. Nationally, Maryland has consistently been in the bottom 10% of hospital patient satisfaction, the worst in ER wait time, and the second-worst in nursing home inspections. A Stakeholder Advisory Council for OHFCQ may have been helpful to restoring public trust and providing constructive feedback to the agency.

Nonprofit Organizations Navigator – Termination Provision – Repeal

SB0069 and HB0147 | Support | Did Not Pass

This legislation would have repealed the sunset of the Nonprofit Organizations Navigator within the Department of Commerce, allowing it to continue. The Nonprofit Organizations Navigator offers direct assistance for nonprofits serving Marylanders to help organizations overcome administrative roadblocks and support them to secure state grant funding through application assistance, payment issues, and grant searches. Without this bill, the Act that created this position sunsets in June 2027.

Justice & Civil Rights

Charitable Organizations – Charitable Donation and Tax–Exempt Status – Revocation (Keeping Charities Nonpartisan Act of 2026)

SB0004 and HB0514 | Support | Did Not Pass

This bill would have embedded in Maryland's tax statutes the precise language of the existing prohibition (as applied and interpreted by the Internal Revenue Service as of January 19, 2025) in Maryland's applicable tax statutes and provide for enforcement by the Secretary of State and Attorney General. It would have authorized enforcement, subject to administrative hearings and appeals consistent with the Administrative Procedures Act, through 'cease and desist' orders for violations, imposition of civil penalties in accordance with levels established under the charitable solicitations law, and, when necessary, revocation of tax exemption status.

LEGISLATION

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

SB0073 | 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 accommodate and expedite voting for elderly voters and voters with disabilities at each early voting center and polling place. The local boards would implement the guidelines, collect feedback on the process from voters, and make immediate adjustments to the process. This bill stalled in the Senate for the second year in a row.

Election Law - Curbside Voting - Pilot Program

HB0641 | Support with Amendment | Did Not Pass

This bill would have created a pilot program for curbside voting that is accessible for people with disabilities. It would also require policies and procedures to be developed for accessible curbside voting that provide options for people with disabilities to vote with and without assistance.

The Arc Maryland concurred with amendments from the National Federation of the Blind that would include verification sent to the voter when their submitted ballot was scanned as received, policies and procedures for the terms of a chain of custody of the submitted ballot, since the voter themselves will not be walking it to the scanner, and policies and procedures around privacy (or the option of the voter to waive privacy rights that might be unavailable when a person is voting from a vehicle occupied by another person.

Disparate Impact Voting Bills

SB0567, HB0462, HB0830, and HB0581 | Oppose | Did Not Pass

Each of these bills would have created barriers to the vote for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. These bills would have created various requirements for voters to have government-issued photo IDs and imposed signature requirements to cast a vote or have a vote count.

Some people with disabilities do not have a recognizable or consistent signature due to their conditions and are twice as likely not to have a government-issued state ID, resulting in a higher chance of being denied the right to vote. Each of these bills failed to advance.

THE ARC MARYLAND 2026 PUBLIC POLICY TEAM

Ande Kolp, Executive Director and Lobbyist for The Arc Maryland
Tony Zanfordino, Board Vice President and Governmental Affairs Committee Co-Chair
Dorothy Plantz, Governmental Affairs Committee Co-Chair
Lori Scott, Education Advocacy Committee Co-Chair
Kim Tart, Education Advocacy Committee Co-Chair
Natalie Brooks, Director of Education Initiatives and Partnerships
Luc Chausse, Director of Communications and Engagement
Sharon Dols, Deputy Executive Director
Ronnesha Jackson, Administrative and Operations Coordinator
Dominique Palmer, Advocacy Specialist
Jackson DeCarlo, Advocacy Assistant

2026 LEGISLATIVE SESSION BY THE NUMBERS

448th Session of the Maryland General Assembly



47 Senators (34 Democrat, 13 Republican)

141 Delegates (102 Democrat, 39 Republican)

1,406 Senate Bills, Bond Initiatives, and Joint Resolutions

2,048 House Bills, Bond Initiatives, and Joint Resolutions



140 Bills Tracked By The Arc Maryland

80 Positions Taken On Bills



The Arc Maryland | 8601 Robert Fulton Drive, Suite 140, Columbia, MD 21046
www.TheArcMD.org | 410-571-9320 | Info@TheArcMD.org