

Bill 10-23 to establish an Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities Commission
Testimony IN FAVOR by Karen Leggett

I am writing in support of Bill 10-23 to establish an Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities Commission in Montgomery County. I am the parent of a young adult with intellectual differences and the chair of the Montgomery County Transition Work Group, a coalition of government agencies, service providers and individuals focused on improving the lives of people with developmental disabilities/autism as they transition beyond high school.

The CDC estimates that one in **six, about 17%, of children aged 3 through 17 years has one or more developmental disabilities**, including Down syndrome, autism spectrum disorders, cerebral palsy, spina bifida, fetal alcohol syndrome, brain injury and more. The Arc Montgomery County estimates that **one in ten households in our county includes a child or adult with IDD.**

After generations of living out their lives in institutions, **more and more of our citizens with IDD are living independently - working, socializing and aging in the community. This new Commission (which must include neurodiverse members) will help ensure their needs are identified, understood and met**, by reviewing potential gaps in services and collaborating with other organizations to make sure needs are addressed in a timely manner.

There are at least **600 individuals in Montgomery County on waiting lists** for services from the Maryland Developmental Disability Administration: these are Montgomery County citizens who deserve assistance, opportunities and attention now - not in some future year. The Commission can identify ways to address these needs across the lifespan from infancy through aging.

The Commission on People with Disabilities rightly focuses primarily on needs that cut across a wide variety of disabilities in transportation, accessibility, pedestrian safety, recreation, etc. This new Commission will be able to focus on the very particular needs of our neurodiverse citizens, **providing information, recommendations and a liaison with the County Council, the County Executive and State agencies and legislators.**