

Karen Morgret



Councilmember Gabe Albornoz,
Beth Schuman, LCSW-C, Chief of Staff
Stella Werner Council Office Building,
100 Maryland Ave,
Rockville, MD 20850

March 6, 2023

Dear Councilmember Gabe Albornoz, and Beth Schuman, LCSW-C, Chief of Staff,

I am writing this letter of support as a citizen of Montgomery County and an employee of a local provider (TLC-The Treatment and Learning Centers, Inc.) that provides supports for individuals with IDD/DD in Support of Bill 10-23 to Establish an Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities Commission. This Commission is greatly needed in Montgomery County Maryland. For full disclosure, I am a commissioner on The Commission for People with Disabilities (CPWD) and co-chair of the Developmental Disabilities Advisory Council (DDAC) here in Montgomery County.

Since 1984, Maryland has been a participant in Medicaid waivers. In 1984, the United States Federal Government approved an application from the Maryland Developmental Disabilities Administration (DDA) to use Medicaid funding to provide home and community-based services instead of services in institutions such as Great Oaks and Rosewood Center.

Until Medicaid home and community-based service (HCBS) waivers were introduced, states could only receive federal funding to provide long-term supports to people with developmental disabilities for institutional care. Because federal funding in Maryland pays half the cost of care, the waivers made it possible to expand home and community-based services and close institutions. The services provided in HCBS waiver are required to cost less than being in an institution., ensure the protection of people's health and welfare, provide adequate and reasonable provider standards to meet the needs of the target population, and ensure that services follow an individualized and person- centered plan of care.

In January 2014, the final rule for home and community-based services (HCBS) was approved. The final rule addresses several sections of Medicaid law under which states may use federal Medicaid funds to pay for HCBS. The rule supports enhanced quality in HCBS programs, adds protections for individuals receiving services. In addition, this rule reflects CMS' intent to ensure that individuals receiving services and supports through Medicaid's HCBS programs have full access to the benefits of community living and can receive services in the most integrated setting. The final rule includes a provision requiring states offering HCBS under existing state plans or waivers to develop transition plans to ensure that HCBS settings will meet final rule's requirements.

The DDA is going through a cultural and systems change that has not occurred since Maryland DDA waivers began in 1984. The changes currently going on will impact services provided to participants, how providers do business, how providers are audited, and staff needed. Now is the time for a new commission that can fully focus on all the upcoming changes that are going on with the HCBS final Rule included in a new DDA Community Pathways Waiver and community Supports Waiver that will go into effect in July 2023.

My suggestion for the new Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities Commission is that you add another no voting member with a focus on Mental Health. Mental health has become a major barrier since COVID with many that have IDD/DD/Autism and all other related disabilities.

Thank you in advance for your consideration of my input.

Sincerely,

Karen Morgret

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