



**Testimony in Support of
Bill 10-23, Health - Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities Commission**

**Lisa Lorraine, Jubilee Association of Maryland
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Good afternoon, council members. My name is Lisa Lorraine, and I am the Breaking Barriers Manager at Jubilee Association of Maryland. Jubilee is a Developmental Disabilities Administration (DDA) residential service provider helping more than 150 adults with I/DD live full and inclusive lives right here in Montgomery County. We received a grant in 2021 to conduct outreach to communities that have been underserved by developmental disability services. Data shows that in Montgomery County, people of Hispanic and Asian descent are not accessing services at the same rates that they are living in our community.

I am here to support Bill 10-23 to create an Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities Commission. We see at Breaking Barriers how much more attention and advocacy is needed for the IDD community in Montgomery County.

Services for people with IDD are complicated to access even for people who are native English-speaking, high-income and college-educated. You can imagine how access becomes much more complicated for people who speak English as a second language, people who struggle to pay for food and rent, or those who don't have access to a computer and are not email users.

Since 2021, I have worked with over 125 Montgomery County families, two-thirds of whom are Hispanic. I've worked with both children and adults who need my help to access services. I'd like to share three recent stories with you to illustrate the needs of this community.

I helped the family of a 22-year-old with Down syndrome make their first appointment to apply for social security benefits, a benefit the young woman has likely been eligible for since age 18, but the family did not know that she could apply for.

I called the office of a neurologist that is a Medicaid provider to advocate for a family who was told they needed to bring their own Spanish interpreter to the appointment even though the medical office must provide an interpreter under law.

And just last week, I assisted a family that was trying to understand their son's school placement and needed copies of certain school documents. It took three attempts with their MCPS middle school to get the documents needed.



Having heard these examples, it may not surprise you that I commonly hear from families that they have felt discriminated against.

In my work, I also collaborate with DDA service providers and many other disability professionals. If the public systems and the providers continue doing business as usual, we will continue to have inequitable outcomes. But if communication is improved through culturally competent staff, flexibility in communication methods, training in how to use interpreters, and other strategies, we may have a shot of having equitable services for ALL people with IDD in our county.

A new Commission would give space and resources to focus on the needs of our most vulnerable residents. The proposed commission would have the ability to advocate at the local, state and federal levels which is much needed as people with IDD interact with all of these systems. The new commission must focus on ALL people with IDD especially those who have been marginalized by the system because of their race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status or language abilities. Thank you.