

Maryland Commission on Disabilities

Thursday, March 12, 2015

4:00 p.m. – 5:43 p.m.

MDOT Headquarters
7201 Corporate Center Drive
Hanover, MD

Present: Denise Camp, Harry L. Chase, Mark Leeds, Andrew D. Levy (Chair), Karen-Ann Lichtenstein, Ronza Othman, Edward Willard, Nollie P. Wood, Lauren Young, Carol A. Beatty, George P. Failla, Jr., Anne Blackfield, Yesheva Kelly

Welcome and Introductions

Carol A. Beatty, Acting Secretary of the Department of Disabilities, was introduced. She is still awaiting confirmation of her appointment. She shared her background with the Commission and outlined some of her priorities for the Department, including helping people with disabilities transition from state institutions into community-based settings and employment for people with disabilities.

The Commission recognized the work Deputy Secretary George Failla did in his role as Acting Secretary during the transition period.

Acting Secretary's Report

The Commissioners were thanked for their time and expertise, and encouraged to reach out to the Acting Secretary with ideas or suggestions about the work MDOD and MCOD can do.

MDOD's website upgrade

- MDOD is getting a new website, which should be ready in early April.
- MDOD will be starting a blog as part of the new website.
- Commission members will be asked to review the new site before it goes live and to contribute to the blog.

ADA Anniversary

- Acting Secretary Beatty and the Chair received resolutions from the House and the Senate commemorating the 25th anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act. Governor Hogan will be issuing an ADA proclamation.
- The Legacy Tour, a bus tour that is travelling the country to celebrate the 25th anniversary of the ADA will be stopping in Baltimore on Sunday, July 26.
 - MDOD's annual ADA celebration will be organized to coincide with the Legacy Tour stop.
 - MDOD is soliciting suggestions for venues in Baltimore City or Baltimore County, ideally a venue that is accessible, that can accommodate around 300 people, and that can accommodate the Legacy Tour's tour bus.

Section 811 Grant Award

- MDOD, in partnership with the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) and the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DHMH) received a \$9.8 million HUD grant award to develop additional Section 811 housing units - subsidized public housing units for people with disabilities.
- Maryland received a similar grant in 2013 to create Section 811 units in the Baltimore-Washington corridor, and the additional funds will help expand Section 811 to the entire state.

Legislative Updates

Deputy Secretary Failla provided the following legislative updates:

Budget

- The Board of Public Works had recommended a 2% reduction for all state agencies, effective January 2015; this is now in effect.
- MDOD had operating budget hearings in both the House and the Senate. It has not been voted on yet.
- MDOD had capital budget hearings in both the House and the Senate for its Access Maryland program (which funds ADA modifications in state facilities).

Recent MDOD testimony

- MDOD testified in support of HB473/SB562, to expand tax credits for businesses that employ individuals with disabilities.
- MDOD testified on HB152/SB535, which would remove the provision in the community college tuition waiver for students with disabilities that requires

students to apply other sources of financial aid towards tuition before the waiver takes effect. (Because of this provision, sometimes this means that waiver-eligible students have no financial aid left over for other expenses.)

Additional legislation

- The public bill list (see attached) was reviewed by the Commission.

The following bills were discussed:

- HB231/SB110 is legislation arising from the Low Intensity Support Services Work Group, created by the legislature. The legislation would make LISS available to people with significant developmental disabilities, whether or not they qualified for full DDA benefits and/or were on the DDA waiting list.
- HB1105/SB761 would establish an ABLE program in Maryland. The federal ABLE Act was passed in December 2014, allowing people with disabilities to create tax-exempt accounts to pay for certain supports services and expenses without impacting eligibility for means-tested benefits. Federal regulations have not come out yet. Maryland is exploring several options to create these accounts, including a task force to examine the issue further.
- HB1161 and SB 853 relate to the work of the Commission on Effective Community Inclusion for Individuals with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities. These bills would create the Ethan Saylor Center for Self-Advocates as Educators.
- MDOD received constituent inquiries about HB1172, which seeks to streamline Office of Health Care Quality's approval process for DDA providers and changes the requirement that OHCQ visit each DDA provider, rather than (per current rules) visit each of DDA's 3,000+ provider sites. MDOD spoke with DHMH about this bill, and it was confirmed that OHCQ does not have the staff to visit all provider sites.

Additional Member Comments and Updates

- Members discussed aspects of accessible parking, including (1) whether parking meters that require someone to make a long round trip between the meter and their car is really "accessible"; (2) the positive impact of having metered accessible parking spots on reducing abuse of these spots.
- Members discussed (1) the challenges of properly monitoring "medically fragile youth group homes" and (2) general concerns about children being served in pediatric group homes or institutional settings.

- Concerns were noted about reductions in Medicaid rates, which could hurt quality of care and cause service interruptions; advocates for developmental disabilities have been very vocal, but there may be a lack of cohesive advocacy for people with mental health needs and people with physical disabilities who may also be impacted by Medicaid reductions.
- DHMH completed its transition plan for bringing Maryland Medicaid programs into compliance with new CMS rules.
- The NFB Law Symposium will be held March 26-27. MDOD is a sponsor and has some extra tickets, which Commissioners can use.
- The Baltimore City Commission on Disabilities (Nollie Wood) is soliciting ideas for Baltimore City's ADA anniversary celebration, scheduled for July 22.
- The State Disability Plan needs to be revised, and will be requesting assistance from the Commission.

Next Meeting

At the next meeting (April 9), Beth Benevides, Associate Director of the Hussman Foundation, will be facilitating a planning session for the Commission.

(Meeting convened at 5:43 p.m.)