



# MARYLAND DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES COALITION

Dedicated to the rights and quality of life for people with developmental disabilities in Maryland

April 3, 2020

The Honorable Lawrence J. Hogan, Jr.  
Governor  
100 State Circle  
Annapolis, MD 21401

Dear Governor Hogan:

The Developmental Disabilities Coalition (Coalition) writes to thank you for the March 31, 2020 Executive Order determining disability services personnel as health care providers necessary for Maryland's response to COVID-19. The designation meets a critical need for people with developmental disabilities, their families, and provider agencies.

As you know, Direct Support Professionals (DSP) play a critical role in the daily lives of the over 17,000 people with developmental disabilities who receive services and supports funded and licensed by the Developmental Disabilities Administration (DDA). Like teachers, DSPs create ways to teach people new skills. Like nurses, they pass medications, provide treatments, document care, and speak with medical professionals. Like social workers, they get people connected to their communities. Like counselors, they listen, reflect, and offer suggestions. DSPs provide whatever support it takes so people can thrive in their communities. **The Executive Order provides much needed support by ensuring DSP are seen as essential personnel, can access child care through the new Essential Personnel Child Care sites, and have the opportunities provided under new federal legislation. Yet, critical needs remain.**

As service provider agencies and DSPs must continue to provide services and supports to people with developmental disabilities through this pandemic, they play a critical role in addressing the healthcare of people with developmental disabilities. While people with disabilities, service provider agencies, and DSPs are taking precautions and following recommended guidelines, it is likely that more cases COVID-19 will continue to occur among this vulnerable population. We understand there is a dire need for personal protective equipment (PPE) throughout Maryland, but when it is available, local health departments do not prioritize service provider agencies and DSPs; therefore, they cannot access any PPE. We need your help to change this. DSPs must have access to PPE so they can protect the people with disabilities they support as well as themselves and their families from the spread of Coronavirus.

In addition, this pandemic has exacerbated any already existing workforce crisis. We remain deeply concerned that service providers will not be able to provide the critical ongoing services and supports to Maryland's most vulnerable citizens. We recommend funds be directed to this workforce for the supplies that they need, enhanced and hazard pay during this crisis (much like what is being provided to state employees), and to support hiring and rapid onboarding.

We appreciate your strong leadership throughout this pandemic, and the clear assertions that all lives matter. This has been incredibly important to people with developmental disabilities, families, and the service providers that support them; especially as service providers scramble to support people in new and very different ways. We remain in close contact with Secretary Beatty and Deputy Secretary Simons, but if we can assist you in anyway, please contact Rachel London, Executive Director of the Maryland Developmental

Disabilities Council and Chair of the Developmental Disabilities Coalition at [RLondon@md-council.org](mailto:RLondon@md-council.org) or 410.533.1929.

Sincerely,



Rachel London, Executive Director  
Maryland Developmental Disabilities Council



Ken Capone, Public Policy Director  
People on the Go of Maryland



Ande Kolp, Executive Director  
The Arc Maryland



Laura Howell, Executive Director  
MD Association of Community Services



Robin Murphy, Executive Director  
Disability Rights Maryland

cc: The Honorable Carol Beatty, Secretary, MDOD  
The Honorable Bernard Simons, Deputy Secretary for Developmental Disabilities, MDH