



Maryland Developmental  
Disabilities Council

# HIGHLIGHTS

2017 Annual Report



EMPOWERMENT



OPPORTUNITY



INCLUSION



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# DEAR FRIENDS & COLLEAGUES,

This year, the Council held its fourth annual photo contest. The theme, “Family Togetherness,” spoke to the moments that many of us consider the most special in our lives—the time we spend with the people we love. We received photos of people enjoying both ordinary and extraordinary moments—playing instruments, going on vacation, celebrating milestones, and simply smiling and hugging.

These photos offer a glimpse into the lives of the people we are reaching through our systems advocacy work and grant making. Similarly, our annual report offers a glimpse of what we accomplished this year for Marylanders with developmental disabilities and their families, including:

- partnering with the Developmental Disabilities Administration to lead the Maryland Community of Practice (CoP) for Supporting Families.
- advocating for inclusive education and child care—helping develop dispute resolution policies, testifying for increased funding for inclusive early education programs, and building the capacity of child care providers to meet the needs of all children side-by-side.
- funding technical assistance to improve the capacity of community service providers throughout Maryland and improve employment outcomes for people with developmental disabilities.
- creating strategic messaging to increase the expectations people have about people with developmental disabilities.

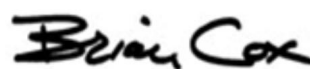
Throughout this report, you’ll find details about these initiatives and more—work that directly impacts the lives of people with developmental disabilities and their families and work that passes on knowledge and builds advocacy skills so activism continues.

While we are very proud of the outcomes that illustrate our impact on education, employment, child care, family supports, and other issues, the best reminder that we are doing meaningful work is in the people we reach. So, next to the numbers that demonstrate our wide-ranging impact on people with developmental disabilities in Maryland, you’ll also see some photos from our photo contest. We thank the contributors for sharing these snapshots of their lives. We hope you enjoy them as much as we do.

Sincerely,



Eric Cole, Chairperson



Brian Cox, Executive Director



Eric Cole



Brian Cox

# OUR VISION & MISSION

## Our Vision

The Maryland Developmental Disabilities Council envisions a state where all people with developmental disabilities exercise control over their lives, reach their full potential, and lead healthy, fulfilling lives with enriching relationships.

## Our Mission

The Maryland Developmental Disabilities Council's mission is to advance the inclusion of people with developmental disabilities in all facets of community life by eliminating barriers, creating opportunities, empowering people, and promoting innovation.

## To Accomplish Our Mission, the Council:

- Educates and informs policymakers about issues of importance to people with developmental disabilities and their families.
- Advocates for policies, practices, laws, and services that support people with developmental disabilities to exercise control over their lives, reach their full potential, and lead productive, meaningful lives.
- Designs and funds initiatives that increase community inclusion, improve services and supports, and increase opportunities for people with developmental disabilities to pursue their hopes, dreams, and aspirations.
- Promotes innovative approaches to supporting people to live, learn, work, and enjoy community life.
- Advocates for the elimination of barriers that create separation and segregation and limit opportunities for full inclusion and community participation.
- Raises public awareness about people's contributions and capabilities so differences are respected, attitudes change, and inclusion and equality become an expectation.
- Supports people with developmental disabilities and their family members to develop advocacy and leadership skills to affect change in their own lives and the lives with others.



**Stormie Zanfordino and his Dad Tony at a Nationals game.**  
Photo Courtesy: Tony Zanfordino

- The Council works in partnership with people with developmental disabilities and their families, as well as other individuals and organizations, to bring about lasting change. We develop a Five Year State Plan that establishes our priorities and serves as a roadmap for accomplishing our goals.

### Who We Are

A small staff working on behalf of the Council to carry out our mission and address the priorities and goals established in the Council's Five Year State Plan. The Maryland Developmental Disabilities Council is part of a network of DD Councils.



Anastasia "Pud" Moore, left, on the go-kart track with her sister Alexandria Montanio. Photo Courtesy: Ian Montanio

**WORKING TO ADVANCE THE INCLUSION OF  
PEOPLE WITH DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES  
IN ALL FACETS OF COMMUNITY LIFE**

# PROMOTING ADVOCACY

## Empowering People with Developmental Disabilities to Create Change

“Nothing about me without me!” The Council helps to build strong self-advocacy skills among disability groups and create activists who are influencing issues, fighting discrimination, expanding opportunities, and sharing important information with their communities. Here are some ways we supported self-advocacy this year:

- funding and supporting **People on the Go Maryland (POG)**, the statewide self-advocacy group led by people with developmental disabilities that works on policy and legislative changes including employment, education, housing, civil rights, and transportation. Highlights of their work this year include fighting for healthcare coverage in Washington, D.C., training people with disabilities, and supporting local self-advocacy groups.
- co-sponsoring **DD Day at the Legislature** along with POG and other members of the DD Coalition. In 2017, a record-setting 725 people registered. People with developmental disabilities, family members, advocates, and providers joined forces to advocate for legislative and budget priorities, such as a rate increase for community services and funding to reduce waiting lists for services.
- providing funds for the **2017 Maryland Youth Leadership Forum (YLF)**, a forum in the summer for high school juniors and seniors with disabilities that educates them about the legislative process and disability rights. 34 students participated. One participant noted, “The examples and information about rights and disabilities helped me a lot.”

## After attending the Youth Leadership Forum,



**87%**

of attendees reported that they knew what the rights were for people with disabilities under the ADA.



**74%**

of students reported that they see themselves as effective organizers for the disability rights movement.

POG supported people with developmental disabilities to attend and participate in a rally in Washington, D.C. for health care.

One participant commented, “I was overwhelmed by the different levels of need. I was grateful to have the opportunity to go and make my voice heard, when so many cannot travel across the country to do this.”

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Senator Guy Guzzone (left) and Senator “Mac” Middleton rally the crowd at DD Day 2017.  
Photo Courtesy: Jennifer Bishop



Ernest Woodard meets Governor Larry Hogan at DD Day 2017.  
Photo Courtesy: Jennifer Bishop



Senator Mike Miller, president of the Maryland Senate, welcomes Youth Leadership Forum students to the State House.  
Photo Courtesy: Independence Now

## MAKING YOUR VOICES HEARD

# DEVELOPING LEADERS

## Increasing Leadership Skills and Knowledge

The Council made several leadership development opportunities possible in 2017, creating advocates who will have an impact on issues affecting people with developmental disabilities now and in the future. Other Council initiatives broadened the disability knowledge base of stakeholders. Here's a glimpse at efforts to expand leadership in 2017:

- funding the expansion of the Parents' Place of Maryland's LEADers leadership development program, to **provide extensive training in Southern Maryland for 25 parents of children with developmental disabilities**. The new training series has a strong focus on preparing and supporting the trainees to remain involved in advocacy and leadership over the long term.
- sponsoring events and information sessions throughout Maryland that increase knowledge and skills, including the **2017 University of Maryland Disability Summit, "Disability in a Polarized Society,"** a cross-disciplinary, cross-disability, and multi-institutional event attended by representatives from a range of universities, state and local governments, agencies, and nonprofit advocacy groups. Many presenters and attendees were people with disabilities.
- **funding small grants to local and statewide organizations** to bring about lasting change through education and action. This included a grant to the Partnership for Extraordinary Minds (xMinds) to develop and pilot a curriculum to train typically-developing middle and high school students to mentor and support students who are on the autism spectrum as they pursue student service learning hours.

**"The vast majority of children on the autism spectrum will be educated in public schools. Partnership for Extraordinary Minds (xMinds) is a volunteer, 501(c)(3) nonprofit founded in 2009 by parents who were frustrated by the lack of a continuum of supports and services these students require in school to develop the academic and functional skills necessary for higher education and/or employment."**

- Partnership for Extraordinary Minds

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# INVESTING IN THE FUTURE

Many survey respondents from the University of Maryland Disability Summit said they will use the information they learned in their workplace or their personal lives to support or improve disability services.

- “I was impressed by how important it is to have different offices within the same institution collaborating and coordinating inclusive efforts—not just instructional, but health services, career services, and more.”
- “I am a parent and I plan to use this knowledge short term to give my 16-year-old with autism some tangible examples of people and organizations working hard to make his chances of a meaningful education and job possible. I’m grateful that there are progressive and out-of-the-box thinkers working on this.”



Council Member JoEllen Barnhart and her family at the UMD Disability Summit.

# INCREASING KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS & EXPECTATIONS

## Raising Awareness

Raising expectations is a theme that runs through all of the Council's work. This year, we decided to create a way for all of us—people with disabilities, family members, providers, educators, employers, everyday citizens—to stop and think twice about what people with developmental disabilities can do. To help us with this goal, we convened a think tank of people with disabilities, parents, providers, educators, and other professionals. Together, we created the message **#ExpectationsMatter #ExpectAbility**.

Through social media, we attached personal stories, news articles, event announcements, and resources to the hashtags to provide a deeper context about the power of raised expectations. We also created a page on our website with more than twenty resources including articles, information sheets, and videos. The information was shared widely with Maryland educators and other professionals statewide and nationally.

The **#ExpectationsMatter #ExpectAbility** campaign roll-out **reached more than 9,000 people** within days and keeps growing.

**6,424** members of the general public educated about developmental disability issues

Other communications strategies implemented include the Council's fourth annual photo contest with the theme, "Family Togetherness," which **reached more than 24,000 people** on social media. For National Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month, we featured Council members and their thoughts on "What Matters to Me" to give voice to people with developmental disabilities and their families.

The Council also increased knowledge and skills through small grants that reached diverse audiences throughout Maryland. One grant to Comunidad de Recursos Hispanos, an organization that serves people with developmental disabilities whose first language is Spanish, was particularly successful in disseminating crucial and timely information. Council funds supported a series of information sessions held in Spanish on topics ranging from "How Do you Apply for Services from the DDA?" to "The IEP Process: Rights and Responsibilities." 60 family members attended, and as a result of these workshops, many parents became advocates in their communities. Participants said, "**The session cleared up doubts I had about IEPs,**" and I plan to use what I have learned to **"... help more people who may not know."**

**"... we so much need this positive messaging. I will be getting this conversation going here ... this should be adopted all over the country and territories. Timing couldn't be better!"**

**- Claire Mantonya, Executive Director,  
Utah Developmental Disabilities Council**

James Lorenz and his sister, Ange, on the boardwalk.  
Photo Courtesy: Ange Lorenz



Hispanic Community Connections workshop attendees.  
Photo Courtesy: Potomac Community Resources



## REACHING KEY AUDIENCES



“I love this campaign. I shared it at Jesse’s IEP meeting yesterday. . . the end of the meeting was spent discussing the importance of expectations across all domains. This is the type of campaign that starts the conversation from a strengths perspective. The team was thrilled!”

– Teresa Herbert, mother of a son with developmental disabilities and Council Member

# SUPPORTING FAMILIES

## Partnering with Families First

The Council co-led, with the Developmental Disabilities Administration, the creation of a **Community of Practice (CoP) for Supporting Families**, establishing a three-year strategic plan developed with feedback from Maryland families and building regional leadership teams. Part of a national initiative, our efforts focused on working with families and state and local organizations to create or improve policies, practices, and systems to better assist and support families that include a member with intellectual/developmental disabilities across the lifespan. Awareness events were held throughout the state to provide information about the framework and guiding principles of the CoP. The framework is also influencing regulation and policy and the planning tools are being incorporated into education settings and employment training for providers, families, and people with disabilities.

“As a parent of a now transitioning daughter, I cannot imagine where my life would have been without the work of the Council.”

## Maryland Community of Practice (CoP) By the Numbers

**130**

people from across the state attended the Maryland Community of Practice (CoP) for Supporting Families kickoff event.

**7**

local CoP leadership teams around Maryland were established to identify and address family support needs.

**12**

organizations are partnering on the MD CoP.

**10**

policies and practices incorporated CoP LifeCourse Framework concepts and tools, impacting the delivery of services in Maryland across the lifespan.

**338**

stakeholders gained knowledge about CoP concepts, goals, and resources.

CoP participants said, “I want to be a part of making policies that support families,” and “I plan to use the information to support the Salisbury community regarding employment and transitional services.”

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Maia Dang with her brothers Zachary and Caleb.  
Photo Courtesy: Monica Dang



Maria Stephanos with her “Papouli” John Stephanos.  
Photo Courtesy: George Stephanos

## ADDRESSING NEEDS

# INCREASING INCLUSIVE CHILD CARE & EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

## Working For Successful Inclusion From The Start

The Council continues to have a strong and positive impact in changing laws and policies to provide children with disabilities more access and opportunity to learn, play, grown and succeed alongside their peers without disabilities. This year, the Council successfully advocated for a law that required MSDE to develop a dispute resolution process for families of children with disabilities to resolve complaints of discrimination. The Council also assisted with students' transitions to work, college, and community life by:

- working with the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) on the implementation of an innovative online tool, the Digital Transition Portfolio.
- funding experts at Tilson & Diaz Solutions to partner with MSDE to design and conduct a series of train-the-trainer workshops and professional development/coaching sessions for school system professionals on how to use the digital portfolios to promote the self-advocacy skills of transition-age youth.
- advocating for inclusive higher education programs in the state. The Council joined a partnership of state agencies to co-host two Capacity-Building Institutes. These sessions provided information to two- and four-year colleges in Maryland about best practices for inclusive higher education. To support continued learning, the Council made stipends available to college personnel to attend the national State of the Art Conference on Postsecondary Education and Individuals with Intellectual Disabilities.

**“The DD Council has worked hard to ensure that children with disabilities have access to child care settings that include children with and without disabilities.”**

**– Leslie Margolis, Managing Attorney,  
Disability Rights Maryland**

## Child Care / Education By the Numbers

**100**

**Child Care Licensing Specialists trained in ADA and Inclusive Practices.**

⋮

**40**

**Bills related to child care and education.**

⋮

**2**

**Capacity-Building Institutes held about best practices for inclusive higher education programs.**



Henry Briemann and his cousin, Catherine Smith.  
Photo Courtesy: Jennifer Briemann



Samari Ponder, right, with his niece Jordynn Dawson.  
Photo Courtesy: Melissa Ponder

# LEARNING TOGETHER

# EXPANDING EMPLOYMENT

## Creating Employment and Meaningful Community Engagement Opportunities for People with Developmental Disabilities

By awarding grants that result in improved employment outcomes, advocating for fair wages, and developing targeted communication strategies, the Council continues to make a difference in ensuring people with developmental disabilities are working and having meaningful days in the community.

We partnered with Maryland Works to award two rounds of grants spanning two years, investing a total of \$144,273 in an initiative that provides customized technical assistance by subject matter experts to improve the way services are provided. Twenty-four service providers, including eight in rural regions, received funding. As a result, 330 people are now either working in competitive employment or having meaningful days in the community. In addition to significant training in the Discovery process and other customized employment processes, other grant outcomes include the creation and implementation of strategic plans, staff manuals, organizational strategies, and sustainable practices at each of the provider agencies.

Other employment initiatives included helping to develop a plan to phase out the use of sub-minimum wage in Maryland and introducing stakeholders to the innovative Growth Through Opportunities (GTO) Cadets Training Program. GTO partners people with developmental disabilities with law enforcement professionals to learn valuable skills for community integration and job placement. Additionally, work has begun on a publication that features employment and meaningful community engagement success stories. The stories will be shared with various stakeholders to dispel misconceptions about people with developmental disabilities working and having meaningful days in the community.

**“Our subject matter expert, funded by the DD Council TIP grant, assisted us on our journey with a real-life lesson in Person Centered Planning . . . nine months later, we see a young woman with new opportunities and an attitude that she has a solid place in her community and that there is no turning back.”**

– Providence Center

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**Madelyn Monzo on the job at Great Harvest Bakery.**  
Photo Courtesy: Providence Center

# OPENING DOORS

## Employment By the Numbers

**\$144,273**

invested in TIP (Transforming and Improving Practices) grants for 24 service providers to create lasting organizational change that improves employment and community-based outcomes for people with developmental disabilities.



**3**

providers allowed their 14(c) certificates (that permit subminimum wages) to expire in a move toward closing sheltered workshops.

**~130**

more people are working in competitive employment.



**~200**

people are more engaged in the community, having meaningful days.

# STRENGTHENING COMMUNITY SUPPORTS

## Working with Partners to Deliver What Marylanders Need

Ensuring that essential services and supports are available to Marylanders with developmental disabilities is a top priority for the Council, bringing us to the state capital throughout the legislative session to advocate for legislation and to many committee and coalition meetings to ensure policies, programs, and practices are effective.

This year, the Council worked closely with Maryland's Developmental Disabilities Administration (DDA) as it began designing expansive changes in the DDA service system, including refinement of eligibility criteria and implementation of two new support waivers. The Council also worked on the development of Maryland's HCBS Settings Rule Transition Plan, providing recommendations and monitoring implementation to ensure that people with developmental disabilities have meaningful choices and experiences in the community.

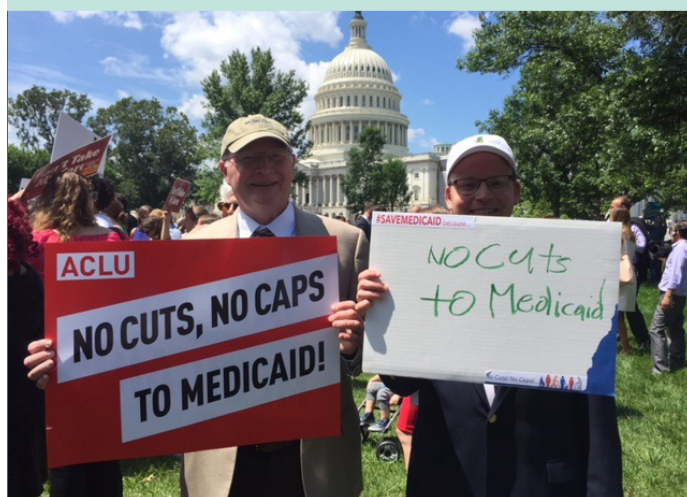
The Council also engaged with a range of stakeholders during the 2017 legislative session on issues that affect people with developmental disabilities across the lifespan.

**The Council prioritized 79 bills and monitored another 78.** Fifteen bills that directly affect people with disabilities in the state of Maryland were passed: seven related to education, four related to health, and others related to child care, housing, guardianship, and the creation of the Maryland ABLE program.



Ken Capone, People on the Go's Public Policy Director, with Senator Chris Van Hollen at a Medicaid rally in Washington, D.C.

Photo Courtesy: People on the Go Maryland



Council Member Russ Young and his son, Andy, participate in a Medicaid rally in Washington, D.C.

## Community Supports By the Numbers

**725**

people registered for DD Day 2017, setting a new record.

⋮

**79**

bills were prioritized by the Council throughout the 2017 Legislative Session.

⋮

**78**

bills were monitored by the Council throughout the 2017 Legislative Session.

**16**

improvements were made to state policies relating to community-based services and supports.

⋮

**15**

laws and regulations were improved.

⋮

**22**

The Council served on 22 statewide committees, coalitions, and councils to help shape public policy.



Trey Colassard, right, plays guitar with his brother, Cory Colassard.

Photo Courtesy: Tina Colassard

## SHARING RESOURCES

# 2017 BY THE NUMBERS

**1,321** 

**people trained through Council supported initiatives**

**54** 

**organizations engaged in systems change efforts through Council initiatives**

**39** 

**programs/policies created or improved**

**198** 

**legislators educated about issues related to developmental disabilities**

**6,424** 

**members of general public educated about developmental disability issues**





**\$144,140** 

**leveraged from other organizations for additional grant funding**

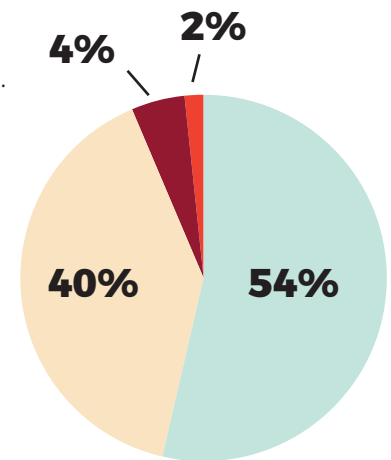
# INVESTMENTS IN MARYLAND

The Council considers our grant funding to be an investment that builds a better and more inclusive community, ultimately building a stronger Maryland.

## Total Project Investments in 2017:

-  Family & Community Supports: \$17,900
-  Employment: \$149,274
-  Child Care & Education: \$5,980
-  Leadership & Advocacy: \$202,203

\*obligated and/or expended in FY2017



# STAY CONNECTED

To learn more about projects currently funded by the Maryland Developmental Disabilities Council, go to the Current Initiatives tab on our website, [md-council.org](http://md-council.org).

For the latest news and information, follow us on Facebook and Twitter and sign up for our electronic newsletter on our website.

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**Maryland Developmental  
Disabilities Council**

**EMPOWERMENT • OPPORTUNITY • INCLUSION**

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