

Montgomery County
Operating Budget
Community Support Program-DD Supplement
Budget Hearing-April

Submitted by: Rick Callahan, Co-Chair of InterACC/DD and Executive Director of Compass, Inc.

This testimony is on behalf of Montgomery County InterACC/DD. The InterACC/DD coalition urges the Health and Human Service Committee to support the County Executive budget that provides funding for the DD-Supplement.

We want to thank the County Executive and the County Council for past and current support for the over 4,000 people with developmental disabilities supported by the InterACC/DD providers.

Who we are, The Inter-Agency Coordinating Committee on Developmental Disabilities is a coalition over 40 nonprofit organizations that provide services whose mission it is to connect people with their communities, and advocate for and along side people with intellectual and developmental disabilities in Montgomery County.

Why we exist, Our organizations exist to support the full inclusion and belonging of people with disabilities in the places in which they live, work, and spend their time throughout Montgomery County. InterACC/DD was formed over 40 years ago to help service providers share knowledge and coordinate in pursuit of their shared mission.

Three areas of what we do.

PROVIDING SERVICES. Addressing the full array of needs through home and community-based services; employment services, meaningful day activities, residential and personal supports, behavioral supports, transportation, family supports, assistive technology technology, and financial management. InterACC/DD members collectively serve about 4,000 Montgomery County citizens.

CONNECTING PEOPLE IN THEIR COMMUNITIES. Helping make connections with friends, neighbors, colleagues, and places of worship to alleviate loneliness and isolation, which has been made worse over the last two years.

ADVOCATING. Advancing causes that impact the wellbeing of people with disabilities. Such as affordable and accessible housing, ABLE accounts, retention and training of direct support professionals, funding for services, representation – by honoring the practice, “nothing about us without us.”

What it takes. More than 5,000 staff of member organizations, most of whom are direct support professionals, as well as many committed volunteers, friends, and family members. Funding of over 200 million by the Maryland Developmental Disabilities Administration (DDA), over \$ 20 million from Montgomery County Health and Human Services (HHS), as well as other government sources, grants, and private donations.

Our needs.

- **Continued funding from the State and County** that address the growing numbers and needs of the people we support.
- **Affordable and accessible housing** for people we support and direct support professionals.
- **Continued support from public officials** as we navigate service delivery, funding, and technology changes being led by DDA.

Over the past two years, all of us have seen how essential Direct Support Professionals are in the provision of essential supports to people with disabilities and their families. The direct support professional must possess critical thinking skills, sound judgment, knowledge on a range of daily life issues, specific training on best practices, first aid and CPR, and much more. The great resignation is upon us, and competition for workers is never been fiercer. People seeking employment have many less demanding options with many of them including work- from-home. The direct support professional does not have that option.

We have basic economics, low supply, and high demand for the service industry. Many businesses are offering much higher wages to attract these employees. These rival

employers have the option to charge more for their products of services to compensate for this expense of competitive wages. We cannot do this.

We are in the midst of historic workforce crisis, and it is not clear what pay rate will attract people towards our field. In calculating the minimum wage in the last three decades it has increased close to 370%. If direct support professional wages kept pace with that increase, an entry level direct support professional should be making over \$30 an hour. There is an opportunity to resolve this crisis, but it will involve an investment from local, state and federal entities. Your past, current and future support will be essential in addressing this long standing concern.

In addition to a highly skilled and reliable direct support workforce, access to affordable and assessable housing also significantly impacts individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities living in Montgomery County. For adults with disabilities relying on Social Security for income would require more than twice (206%) of their monthly income to afford a moderately priced one-bedroom apartment. Access to subsidized housing opportunities is encumbered with long wait lists and limited availability.

On behalf for InterACC, I urge a favorable report for the County Executive Operating Budget

Respectfully Submitted by: Rick Callahan and the 40 members of the Montgomery County InterACC/DD providers.

Thank you, and I hope all of us see the light at the end of this pandemic tunnel!!