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People on the Go Maryland

2026 Legislative Session Final Report

Report Date: April 10, 2026

Introduction



Mat Rice, Executive Director, People on the Go Maryland

People on the Go Maryland is a self advocacy and systems advocacy organization run for and by those with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities whose mission it is to promote self

advocacy and civil rights throughout the state with approximately 500 members statewide. During the 2026 Maryland legislative session, People on the Go Maryland engaged in extensive advocacy on behalf of individuals with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities across the state.

This report is prepared for our members, funders, and the broader community to provide a comprehensive overview of People on the Go Maryland's advocacy during the 2026 Maryland legislative session. It details our testimony, the bills we supported or opposed, the outcomes of those bills, and the reach of our advocacy across the Maryland General Assembly.

Executive Summary



Mat Rice (Executive Director) and Tracy Wright (Deputy Director and Director of Training) advocating in Annapolis

The 2026 Maryland legislative session was one of our most active and impactful ever. People on the Go Maryland submitted a total of 30 testimony submissions, including testimony on 28 individual bills and 2 budget hearings before House and Senate subcommittees. Our testimony was heard by committees with a combined total of approximately 173 committee seats across 10

committees in both the House of Delegates and the Senate, reaching an estimated 160 to 175 individual legislators.

Our advocacy spanned a wide range of policy areas critical to our community, including criminal justice reform, voting rights and election accessibility, adult protective services, education, financial exploitation protections, housing, disability services, and plain language accessibility. We submitted independent testimony on 25 bills and participated in coalition testimony on 3 additional bills, demonstrating both our independent voice and our collaborative strength within the disability advocacy community.

Several bills we advocated for achieved significant legislative milestones: HB 216 (Benefits Exploitation) and its crossfile SB 140 both passed both chambers and were enrolled; HB 226/SB 22 (Department of Disabilities Housing Programs) passed both chambers; HB 311 (School Accessibility and Emergency Planning) passed both chambers; HB 1008 (Vulnerable Adult Banking Protection Act) passed both chambers; SB 182 (Adult Protective Services) passed the House unanimously 120-0; and HB 1015 (Ralph's Act) passed enrolled. Additionally, SB 29 (Plain Language Ballot Questions) passed the Senate unanimously 44-0 and crossed over to the House.

Section 1: Bills People on the Go Maryland Independently Testified On

This section provides a comprehensive listing of all 25 bills on which People on the Go Maryland submitted independent testimony during the 2026 legislative session. When crossfile versions of a bill exist, both versions are listed separately to reflect our full advocacy reach.

1. HB 81: Motor Vehicles – Police Stops – Secondary Enforcement and Excludable Evidence

POG Position: Favorable with Amendment

Testimony Date: January 26, 2026

Committee: Judiciary; Environment and Transportation

Sponsor(s): Delegate Phillips

Crossfile: SB 55 (Senator Sydnor)

Current Status: Stalled in the House Judiciary Committee. Cross-filed with SB 55, which also stalled in the Senate. Neither version crossed over. Did not pass.

Testimony: Mat Rice provided written testimony only

Plain Language Description: Requires officers to document all reasons for traffic stops. POG proposed an amendment to require documentation of specific observable facts rather than vague language, protecting people with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities from pretextual stops.

2. HB 155: Public Safety – Law Enforcement Officers – Prohibition on Face Coverings

POG Position: Favorable

Testimony Date: February 24, 2026

Committee: House Judiciary

Sponsor(s): Delegates Williams, Lehman, Pena-Melnyk, Behler, Boafo, Charkoudian, Crutchfield, Feldmark, Foley, Forbes, Guyton, Harrison, Hill, Ivey, Kaufman, Korman, Martinez, Mireku-North, Palakovich Carr, Queen, Rosenberg, Solomon, Spiegel, Stinnett, Terrasa, Vogel, Wells, White Holland, Wilkins, and Young (30 sponsors)

Crossfile: SB 1 (Senators Augustine, Love, Beidle, Brooks, Feldman, Ferguson, Guzzone, Hettleman, Kagan, King, Kramer, Lam, Lewis Young, Muse, Rosapepe, Smith, Sydnor, and Zucker – 18 sponsors)

Current Status: Stalled in the House Judiciary Committee. Did not cross over. However, the crossfile SB 1 crossed over to the House. Did not pass.

Testimony: Written testimony was submitted.

Plain Language Description: Prohibits police officers from wearing face coverings while on duty, with exceptions for undercover work and health/safety emergencies. POG supports because face

coverings create communication barriers for people with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities who rely on facial expressions and lip reading.

3. SB 1: Public Safety – Law Enforcement Officers – Prohibition on Face Coverings

POG Position: Favorable

Testimony Date: January 21, 2026

Committee: Senate Judicial Proceedings

Sponsor(s): Senators Augustine, Love, Beidle, Brooks, Feldman, Ferguson, Guzzone, Hettleman, Kagan, King, Kramer, Lam, Lewis Young, Muse, Rosapepe, Smith, Sydnor, and Zucker (18 sponsors)

Crossfile: HB 155

Current Status: Passed the Senate (31-13) on February 3, 2026. Crossed over to the House with a hearing held March 31, 2026, in the House Judiciary Committee. Did not pass the House before the end of session. Did not pass.

Testimony: Written testimony was also submitted.

Plain Language Description: Senate crossfile of HB 155. Same provisions prohibiting police face coverings. POG testified favorably on both versions of this bill to ensure coverage in both chambers.

4. HB 216: Criminal Law – Benefits Exploitation

POG Position: Favorable

Testimony Date: January 27, 2026

Committee: House Judiciary Committee

Sponsor(s): Delegates Kaufman, Fair, Feldmark, Pena-Melnyk, Tomlinson, Cardin, Phillips, Stinnett, Simmons, McComas, Moreno, Arikan, Taylor, Simpson, Moon, Conaway, and Woods (17 sponsors – bipartisan)

Crossfile: SB 140 (Senator West)

Current Status: PASSED. Passed the House (131-0) and the Senate (44-0). Returned Passed on April 9, 2026. Crossfile SB 140 also Passed Enrolled. Awaiting Governor's signature.

Testimony: Written testimony was also submitted.

Plain Language Description: Makes it a crime to recruit, harbor, transport, or obtain a person for the purpose of stealing their government benefits through deception, coercion, exploitation, or isolation. This is critical for people with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities who are vulnerable to benefits exploitation.

5. HB 226: Department of Disabilities – Housing Programs and Affiliated Foundations – Establishment

POG Position: Favorable

Testimony Date: February 2026

Committee: House Appropriations

Sponsor(s): Chair, Appropriations Committee (By Request – Departmental – Disabilities)

Crossfile: SB 22 (Chair, Finance Committee – By Request – Departmental – Disabilities)

Current Status: PASSED. Returned Passed on April 9, 2026. Both HB 226 and crossfile SB 22 passed both chambers. Awaiting Governor's signature.

Testimony:.. Written testimony was also submitted.

Plain Language Description: Establishes housing programs and affiliated foundations within the Department of Disabilities to address the critical housing needs of people with disabilities. POG supports as housing is one of the most critical issues facing people with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities.

6. SB 22: Department of Disabilities – Housing Programs and Affiliated Foundations – Establishment

POG Position: Favorable

Testimony Date: February 2026

Committee: Senate Finance

Sponsor(s): Chair, Finance Committee (By Request – Departmental – Disabilities)

Crossfile: HB 226

Current Status: PASSED ENROLLED on April 9, 2026. Cross-filed with HB 226, which also passed both chambers.

Testimony: Mat Rice provided virtual testimony before the Senate Finance Committee. Written testimony was also submitted.

Plain Language Description: Senate crossfile of HB 226. Same provisions establishing housing programs within the Department of Disabilities. POG testified favorably on both versions.

7. HB 282: Adult Protective Services – Modifications

POG Position: Favorable with Amendment

Testimony Date: February 5, 2026

Committee: House Judiciary

Sponsor(s): Chair, Judiciary Committee (By Request – Departmental – Human Services)

Crossfile: SB 182 (Chair, Judicial Proceedings Committee – By Request – Departmental – Human Services)

Current Status: Crossed over to the Senate. Reached Senate Second Reading Passed with favorable report on April 9, 2026. Did not complete Third Reading before session end. Crossfile SB 182 PASSED — Returned Passed on April 6, 2026, having passed the House floor unanimously (120-0).

Testimony: Written testimony was also submitted.

Plain Language Description: Modernizes adult protective services. POG supports but proposed amendments to remove the 'relationship of trust' limitation, restore broader exploitation definitions, and add protections specific to people with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities.

8. HB 297: Adult Education – High School Diploma Pathways – MDiplomaWorks Pathway

POG Position: Favorable

Testimony Date: February 11, 2026

Committee: House Ways and Means

Sponsor(s): Chair, Ways and Means Committee (By Request – Departmental – Labor)

Crossfile: SB 70 (Chair, Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee – By Request – Departmental – Labor)

Current Status: Passed the House (124-8). Crossed over to the Senate and passed Senate Third Reading (42-0) on April 9, 2026. Crossfile SB 70 reached House Second Reading Passed with Amendments on April 8, 2026.

Testimony: Mat Rice provided virtual testimony before the House Ways and Means Committee. Written testimony was also submitted.

Plain Language Description: Establishes alternative methods of earning a high school diploma through demonstrated competencies and workforce experience. Important for people with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities who face barriers in traditional educational pathways.

9. SB 70: Adult Education – High School Diploma Pathways – MDiplomaWorks Pathway

POG Position: Favorable

Testimony Date: February 2026

Committee: Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment

Sponsor(s): Chair, Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee (By Request – Departmental – Labor)

Crossfile: HB 297

Current Status: Passed the Senate (44-0). Crossed over to the House. Reached House Second Reading Passed with Amendments on April 8, 2026. Cross-filed with HB 297.

Testimony: Mat Rice provided virtual testimony before the Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee. Written testimony was also submitted.

Plain Language Description: Senate crossfile of HB 297. Same provisions establishing the MDiplomaWorks pathway. POG testified favorably on both versions.

10. HB 310: Correctional Services – Restrictive Housing – Individuals With Intellectual and/or Developmental Disabilities

POG Position: Favorable with Amendment

Testimony Date: March 3, 2026

Committee: House Judiciary

Sponsor(s): Delegates Kaufman, Holmes, A. Johnson, S. Johnson, Shetty, Conaway, Williams, Phillips, Moon, Simpson, Moreno, McComas, Nkongolo, Simmons, and Taylor (15 sponsors – bipartisan)

Crossfile: SB 268 (Senator Henson)

Current Status: Passed the House (132-0). Crossed over to the Senate — referred to Judicial Proceedings Committee on March 19, 2026. Did not advance further in the Senate. Crossfile SB 268 stalled in Senate committee. Did not pass.

Testimony: Written testimony was submitted.

Plain Language Description: Protects people with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities from prolonged solitary confinement. POG proposed amendments to close loopholes, cap restrictive housing at 30 consecutive days and 60 cumulative days per year, and require individualized assessments.

11. HB 311: Public Schools – Individuals With Disabilities – Accessibility and Emergency Planning

POG Position: Favorable

Testimony Date: February 11, 2026

Committee: House Ways and Means

Sponsor(s): Delegates Kaufman, Holmes, A. Johnson, S. Johnson, and Shetty (5 sponsors)

Crossfile: SB 507 (Senators Zucker, Attar, Brooks, Feldman, Harris, Kagan, and Watson – 7 sponsors)

Current Status: PASSED. Passed the House (119-0) and the Senate (40-0). Returned Passed on April 9, 2026. Crossfile SB 507 reached House Second Reading Passed on April 8, 2026.

Awaiting Governor's signature.

Testimony: Mat Rice provided in person testimony before the House Ways and Means Committee. Written testimony was also submitted.

Plain Language Description: Requires school systems to identify accessibility issues during safety evaluations and report when facilities become inaccessible in ways that could impede evacuation or emergency response for students with disabilities.

12. SB 507: Public Schools – Individuals With Disabilities – Accessibility and Emergency Planning

POG Position: Favorable

Testimony Date: March 2026

Committee: Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment

Sponsor(s): Senators Zucker, Attar, Brooks, Feldman, Harris, Kagan, and Watson (7 sponsors)

Crossfile: HB 311

Current Status: Passed the Senate (39-0) on March 20, 2026. Crossed over to the House. Reached House Second Reading Passed on April 8, 2026. Cross-filed with HB 311, which passed both chambers.

Testimony: Mat Rice provided in person testimony before the Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee. Written testimony was also submitted.

Plain Language Description: Senate crossfile of HB 311. Same provisions on school accessibility and emergency planning. POG testified favorably on both versions.

13. HB 454: SAVE Our Elections Act of 2026

POG Position: Unfavorable

Testimony Date: February 11, 2026

Committee: House Government, Labor, and Elections

Sponsor(s): Delegates Hornberger, Adams, Anderson, Arentz, Baker, Beauchamp, Bouchat, Buckel, Ciliberti, Ghrist, Griffith, Hartman, Hinebaugh, Howard, Hutchinson, Jacobs, Kipke, R. Long, Mangione, McComas, Metzgar, Miller, M. Morgan, T. Morgan, Nawrocki, Pippy, Schmidt, Szeliga, Tomlinson, and Valentine (30 sponsors – all Republican)

Crossfile: None identified

Current Status: Stalled in the House Government, Labor, and Elections Committee. Did not cross over. Did not pass.

Testimony: Written testimony was submitted.

Plain Language Description: Would require the SAVE federal database to verify citizenship before voter registration. POG opposes because the SAVE system is unreliable and would create insurmountable barriers for people with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities, people of color, and other marginalized groups seeking to exercise their right to vote.

14. HB 462: Elections – In-Person Voting – Proof of Identity

POG Position: Opposed

Testimony Date: January 28, 2026

Committee: House Government, Labor and Elections

Sponsor(s): Delegates R. Long, Adams, Anderson, Arentz, Baker, Beauchamp, Bouchat, Buckel, Ciliberti, Ghrist, Griffith, Hartman, Hinebaugh, Hornberger, Howard, Hutchinson, Jacobs, Kipke, Mangione, McComas, Metzgar, Miller, M. Morgan, T. Morgan, Nawrocki, Pippy, Schmidt, Szeliga, Tomlinson, and Valentine (30 sponsors – all Republican)

Crossfile: SB 567

Current Status: Stalled in the House Government, Labor, and Elections Committee. Did not cross over. Crossfile SB 567 also stalled. Did not pass.

Testimony: Written testimony was submitted.

Plain Language Description: Requires voters to present government-issued photo ID or alternative identification to vote. POG opposes because many people with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities lack photo ID, creating barriers that would effectively disenfranchise vulnerable populations including people of color and other marginalized groups.

15. HB 499: Election Law – Registered Voter List and Petitions (Ballot Petition Modernization Act)

POG Position: Favorable with Amendment

Testimony Date: February 11, 2026

Committee: House Government, Labor, and Elections

Sponsor(s): Delegates Ruth, Ebersole, Guyton, Hill, Lewis, J. Long, McCaskill, Moreno, Ruff, Terrasa, and White Holland (11 sponsors)

Crossfile: None identified

Current Status: Stalled in the House Government, Labor, and Elections Committee. Did not cross over. Did not pass.

Testimony: Written testimony was submitted.

Plain Language Description: Modernizes the ballot petition process with electronic signatures.

POG proposed an amendment to ensure people with disabilities can sign petitions through alternative methods such as name stamps, assistive technology etc.

16. HB 641: Election Law – Curbside Voting – Pilot Program

POG Position: Favorable

Testimony Date: February 18, 2026

Committee: House Government, Labor, and Elections

Sponsor(s): Delegates Williams, Coley, Foley, Hill, Lehman, Martinez, Moon, Palakovich Carr, Solomon, Spiegel, Stinnett, Taveras, Wells, and Wilkins (14 sponsors)

Crossfile: None identified

Current Status: Stalled in the House Government, Labor, and Elections Committee. Did not cross over. Did not pass.

Testimony: Written testimony was submitted.

Plain Language Description: Establishes a curbside voting pilot program allowing voters to cast ballots from accessible locations outside polling places. Critical for voters with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities who face physical and sensory barriers at traditional polling locations.

17. HB 1008: Vulnerable Adult Banking Protection Act

POG Position: Favorable with Amendments

Testimony Date: March 10, 2026

Committee: House Economic Matters

Sponsor(s): Delegates Queen and Spiegel (2 sponsors)

Crossfile: SB 753 (Senator Kramer)

Current Status: PASSED. Passed the House (133-0) and the Senate (46-0). Returned Passed on April 7, 2026. Crossfile SB 753 reached House Second Reading Passed on April 8, 2026.

Awaiting Governor's signature.

Testimony: Joint written testimony was submitted by POG and The Arc Maryland.

Plain Language Description: Allows banks to delay or deny transactions if they suspect financial exploitation of a vulnerable adult. POG proposed amendments to prevent banking discrimination based on disability status while protecting people with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities from exploitation.

18. SB 753: Vulnerable Adult Banking Protection Act

POG Position: Favorable with Amendment

Testimony Date: March 2026

Committee: Senate Finance

Sponsor(s): Senator Kramer

Crossfile: HB 1008

Current Status: Passed the Senate (38-0) on March 20, 2026. Crossed over to the House. Reached House Second Reading Passed on April 8, 2026. Cross-filed with HB 1008, which passed both chambers.

Testimony: Joint written testimony was submitted by POG and The Arc Maryland.

Plain Language Description: Senate crossfile of HB 1008. Joint testimony submitted by People on the Go Maryland and The Arc Maryland in support with amendments to protect the rights of people with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities in banking.

19. SB 73: Election Law – Polling Place Procedures – Voting by Elderly Voters and Voters With Disabilities (Accessible and Expedited Voting Act)

POG Position: Favorable

Testimony Date: January 23, 2026

Committee: Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment

Sponsor(s): Senator Ellis

Crossfile: None identified

Current Status: Stalled in the Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee after a hearing on February 11, 2026. Did not cross over. Did not pass.

Testimony: Written testimony was submitted.

Plain Language Description: Requires the State Board of Elections to establish guidelines for accommodated and expedited voting for elderly voters and voters with disabilities, including

dedicated lines and additional assistance. POG supports as this directly benefits voters with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities.

20. SB 583: Developmental Disabilities Administration – Self-Directed Services Manual – Public Comment

POG Position: Favorable with Amendment

Testimony Date: February 24, 2026

Committee: Senate Finance

Sponsor(s): Senators Jennings, Bailey, Salling, Gallion, Carozza, and Ready (6 sponsors – all Republican)

Crossfile: HB 1593 (Delegates Guyton, Alston, Bagnall, Cullison, Guzzone, Hill, Hutchinson, S. Johnson, Kaufman, Kipke, Lopez, Martinez, M. Morgan, Reilly, Rosenberg, Ross, Taveras, White Holland, and Woorman – 19 sponsors, bipartisan)

Current Status: Stalled in the Senate Finance Committee after a hearing on February 24, 2026.

However, the crossfile HB 1593 crossed over to the Senate. Did not pass.

Testimony: Virtual and Written testimony was submitted.

Plain Language Description: Requires public comment for changes to DDA service manuals.

POG proposed expanding beyond self-directed services to cover ALL DDA service manuals and requiring plain language versions of all proposed changes to ensure accessibility for people with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities.

21. HB 1593: Community Pathways Waiver – Adoption of Regulations (DDA Self-Directed Services Manual)

POG Position: Favorable with Amendment

Testimony Date: March 2026

Committee: House Health

Sponsor(s): Delegates Guyton, Alston, Bagnall, Cullison, Guzzone, Hill, Hutchinson, S. Johnson, Kaufman, Kipke, Lopez, Martinez, M. Morgan, Reilly, Rosenberg, Ross, Taveras, White Holland, and Woorman (19 sponsors – bipartisan)

Crossfile: SB 583

Current Status: Passed the House (132-0) on March 23, 2026. Crossed over to the Senate — referred to Finance Committee. Did not advance further in the Senate. Did not pass.

Testimony: Written testimony was submitted.

Plain Language Description: House crossfile of SB 583. Same provisions requiring public comment for DDA service manual changes. POG testified favorably with amendment on both versions.

22. HB 44: Election Law – Petitions and Ballot Questions – Contents, Plain Language Requirement, and Procedures

POG Position: Favorable

Testimony Date: February 4, 2026

Committee: House Government, Labor, and Elections

Sponsor(s): Delegate Feldmark

Crossfile: SB 29 (Senator Kagan)

Current Status: Stalled in the House Government, Labor, and Elections Committee after a hearing on February 4, 2026. Crossfile SB 29 passed the Senate unanimously (44-0). Did not pass.

Testimony: Virtual and written testimony was submitted.

Plain Language Description: Requires that ballot question summaries and petition signature pages be written in plain language. This is a key accessibility issue for people with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities who may struggle with complex legal language on ballots.

23. SB 29: Election Law – Petitions and Ballot Questions – Contents, Plain Language Requirement, and Procedures

POG Position: Favorable

Testimony Date: January 21, 2026

Committee: Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment

Sponsor(s): Senator Kagan

Crossfile: HB 44 (Delegate Feldmark)

Current Status: Passed the Senate unanimously (44-0) on February 5, 2026. Crossed over to the House — hearing scheduled April 1, 2026, in the Government, Labor, and Elections Committee.

Did not pass the House before session end. Did not pass.

Testimony: Virtual and written testimony was submitted.

Plain Language Description: Senate crossfile of HB 44. Same provisions requiring plain language in ballot questions and petition summaries. POG testified favorably on both versions of this bill. SB 29 passed the Senate unanimously 44-0, a major victory for accessible elections.

24. SB 742: Maryland Protecting People With Disabilities Act

POG Position: Favorable

Testimony Date: March 3, 2026

Committee: Senate Finance

Sponsor(s): Senators Guzzone and Zucker (2 sponsors)

Crossfile: HB 1445 (Delegates Wolek, Bagnall, Barnes, Cullison, Foley, Forbes, Fraser-Hidalgo, Guyton, Kaufman, Solomon, Spiegel, Stinnett, Vogel, Wims, Woorman, and Young – 16 sponsors)

Current Status: Passed the Senate (42-0) on March 23, 2026. Crossed over to the House. Reached House Second Reading Passed with Amendments on April 9, 2026. Crossfile HB 1445 passed

House Third Reading (132-1) on April 9, 2026. Did not complete passage in both chambers before session end.

Testimony: Mat Rice provided in person testimony before the Senate Finance Committee. Tracy Wright (Deputy Director and Director of Training) also testified, along with POG members Marlene Hendler and Joanna Weaver.

Plain Language Description: Strengthens protections for individuals receiving home and community-based services (HCBS). Ensures timely eligibility determinations, prohibits procedural disenrollment, requires plain language notices, and protects the rights of people with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities in the service system.

25. HB 964: Secure the Vote Act of 2026

POG Position: Opposed

Testimony Date: February 2026

Committee: House Government, Labor, and Elections

Sponsor(s): Delegates Grammer, Adams, Anderson, Arentz, Arikan, Baker, Beauchamp, Bouchat, Buckel, Chisholm, Ciliberti, Fisher, Ghrist, Hartman, Hinebaugh, Hornberger, Howard, Hutchinson, Jacobs, Kipke, R. Long, Mangione, McComas, Metzgar, Miller, M. Morgan, T. Morgan, Nawrocki, Nkongolo, Pippy, Reilly, Schmidt, Szeliga, Tomlinson, Valentine, and Wivell (36 sponsors – all Republican)

Crossfile: None identified

Current Status: Stalled in the House Government, Labor, and Elections Committee after a hearing on February 25, 2026. Did not cross over. Did not pass.

Testimony: Written testimony was submitted.

Plain Language Description: A comprehensive election restriction bill that would repeal ballot drop box requirements, restrict absentee voting, require proof of citizenship for voter registration, mandate voter photo ID, and prohibit return of absentee ballots through drop boxes.

POG opposes this bill because it would create significant barriers for people with intellectual

and/or developmental disabilities, people of color, elderly voters, and other marginalized groups. The proof of citizenship and voter ID requirements would disproportionately disenfranchise people with disabilities who face challenges obtaining documentation.



Tracy Wright, Deputy Director and Director of Training, People on the Go Maryland

Section 2: Coalition Testimony

In addition to our independent testimony, People on the Go Maryland participated in coalition advocacy efforts. The following bills were supported through coalition testimony, demonstrating the strength of collaborative advocacy within the disability community.

1. HB 58: Transportation – Paratransit Services – Interjurisdictional Routes

Coalition: Maryland Developmental Disabilities Coalition (DD Coalition)

Position: Support with Amendment

Testimony Date: February 5, 2026

Committee: House Environment and Transportation

Sponsor(s): Delegate Healey

Current Status: Stalled in the House Environment and Transportation Committee after a hearing on February 5, 2026. Did not cross over. Did not pass.

Plain Language Description: Requires counties applying for state transportation funding to identify cross-county paratransit routes. The DD Coalition supported with an amendment to update 'handicapped' terminology to person-first language referencing people with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities.

2. HB 435: Places of Public Accommodation – Open Movie Captioning

Coalition: Submitted by Deanna Tilden on behalf of disability community coalition

Position: Favorable

Testimony Date: February 2026

Committee: House Government, Labor, and Elections (Government and Veterans Affairs Subcommittee)

Sponsor(s): Delegate Bhandari

Crossfile: SB 259 (Senator Jackson)

Current Status: Passed the House (126-5) on March 18, 2026. Crossed over to the Senate — referred to Judicial Proceedings Committee. Did not advance further. Crossfile SB 259 stalled in committee. Did not pass.

Plain Language Description: Requires movie theaters and other places of public accommodation to provide open captioning for movies. Supports access for people who are Deaf, hard of hearing, or who have intellectual and/or developmental disabilities that affect auditory processing.

3. HB 1015: Ralph's Act – Health – Developmental Disabilities Services – Expedited Eligibility Determination

Coalition: Maryland Developmental Disabilities Coalition (DD Coalition)

Position: Favorable

Testimony Date: 2026 Session

Committee: House Health (original); Senate Finance (opposite chamber)

Sponsor(s): Delegates Solomon, Shetty, Kaufman, Alston, Bagnall, Cullison, Guzzone, Hill, Hutchinson, Kipke, Lopez, Martinez, M. Morgan, Reilly, Rosenberg, Ross, Szeliga, White Holland, and Woorman (19 sponsors – bipartisan)

Crossfile: SB 721

Current Status: PASSED ENROLLED on April 9, 2026. Passed the House (137-0) and the Senate (43-0). House concurred with Senate amendments (132-0). Cross-filed with SB 721. Awaiting Governor's signature.

Plain Language Description: Requires the Maryland Department of Health to provide an expedited eligibility determination for developmental disabilities services for individuals who have received similar services in another state. Critical for people with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities who relocate to Maryland and need continuity of services.



People on the Go Maryland advocates and self-advocates

Section 3: Budget Testimony

People on the Go Maryland submitted budget testimony before two legislative subcommittees opposing proposed cuts to the Developmental Disabilities Administration (DDA) budget. Protecting the DDA budget is essential to maintaining services for people with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities across Maryland.

Testimony 1: House Appropriations Health and Social Services Subcommittee

Date: February 26, 2026

Position: Opposition to proposed budget cuts

Testifiers: Multiple people testified on behalf of People on the Go Maryland, including Mat Rice (Executive Director) and POG member Josh Del Close. This was Josh Del Close's first time testifying before a legislative body, demonstrating People on the Go Maryland's commitment to developing new advocacy voices within the community of people with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities.

Summary: People on the Go Maryland testified in opposition to proposed budget cuts to the DDA. The testimony specifically opposed the elimination of the wage exception for self-directed services, the reduction of community residential rates, and the consolidation of day program funding categories. These cuts would directly harm the quality of life of people with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities throughout Maryland.



People on the Go Maryland members and advocates at the State House

Testimony 2: Senate Health and Human Services Subcommittee

Date: February 27, 2026

Position: Opposition to proposed budget cuts

Testifiers: Multiple people testified including Mat Rice and POG member Josh Del Close, who also testified before this subcommittee, appearing before both the House and Senate budget subcommittees on consecutive days.

Summary: We submitted substantially similar testimony to the Senate subcommittee, reinforcing our opposition to the same DDA budget cuts. This testimony included additional supporting data and research on the impact of proposed cuts on people with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities throughout Maryland.

Section 4: Legislative Reach Analysis

This section estimates the total number of legislators reached through our testimony and advocacy during the 2026 legislative session. The estimate is based on the membership of

committees that heard our testimony, the sponsors and co-sponsors of bills we testified on, and floor votes on bills that advanced.

Committee Members Reached

Our testimony was heard by the following legislative committees. With 28 individual bill testimonies across both chambers plus budget testimony, our reach was substantial.

- House Health Committee – 19 members – Heard testimony on: HB 1593, HB 1015 (coalition)
- House Judiciary Committee – 20 members – Heard testimony on: HB 81, HB 155, HB 216, HB 282, HB 310
- House Ways and Means Committee – 19 members – Heard testimony on: HB 297, HB 311
- House Appropriations Committee – 23 members – Heard testimony on: HB 226, DDA Budget (subcommittee)
- House Environment and Transportation Committee – 20 members – Heard testimony on: HB 58 (coalition)
- House Economic Matters Committee – 20 members – Heard testimony on: HB 1008
- House Government, Labor, and Elections Committee – 19 members – Heard testimony on: HB 44, HB 435 (coalition), HB 454, HB 462, HB 499, HB 641, HB 964
- Senate Finance Committee – 11 members – Heard testimony on: SB 22, SB 583, SB 742, SB 753, HB 1015 (opposite chamber)
- Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee – 11 members – Heard testimony on: SB 1
- Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee – 11 members – Heard testimony on: SB 29, SB 70, SB 73, SB 507
- Senate Health and Human Services Subcommittee – Heard testimony on: DDA Budget (subcommittee of Budget and Taxation)

Estimated Legislative Reach:

Based on exact committee rosters from the Maryland General Assembly, our testimony was heard by committees with a combined total of 173 committee seats across 10 committees with confirmed membership data, plus the Senate Health and Human Services Subcommittee.

Accounting for legislators who serve on multiple committees, we estimate our testimony reached approximately 160 to 175 individual legislators during the 2026 session.

Sponsors and Co-Sponsors

In addition to committee members, our advocacy reached the sponsors and co-sponsors of the bills we testified on. Key sponsors include:

- Delegate Phillips (HB 81)
- Delegates Williams, Lehman, Pena-Melnyk, and 27 co-sponsors (HB 155 – 30 sponsors total); Senators Augustine, Love, and 16 co-sponsors (SB 1 – 18 sponsors total)
- Delegates Kaufman, Fair, Feldmark, and 14 co-sponsors (HB 216 – 17 sponsors, bipartisan); Senator West (SB 140)
- Chair, Appropriations Committee (HB 226); Chair, Finance Committee (SB 22) – By Request, Departmental, Disabilities
- Chair, Judiciary Committee (HB 282); Chair, Judicial Proceedings Committee (SB 182) – By Request, Departmental, Human Services
- Chair, Ways and Means Committee (HB 297); Chair, EEE Committee (SB 70) – By Request, Departmental, Labor
- Delegates Kaufman, Holmes, and 13 co-sponsors (HB 310 – 15 sponsors, bipartisan); Senator Henson (SB 268)
- Delegates Kaufman, Holmes, A. Johnson, S. Johnson, and Shetty (HB 311); Senators Zucker and 6 co-sponsors (SB 507 – 7 sponsors)

- Delegates Hornberger and 29 co-sponsors (HB 454 – 30 sponsors, all Republican)
- Delegates R. Long and 29 co-sponsors (HB 462 – 30 sponsors, all Republican)
- Delegates Ruth, Ebersole, Guyton, Hill, and 7 co-sponsors (HB 499 – 11 sponsors)
- Delegates Williams, Coley, Foley, Hill, and 10 co-sponsors (HB 641 – 14 sponsors)
- Delegates Queen and Spiegel (HB 1008); Senator Kramer (SB 753)
- Senator Ellis (SB 73)
- Senators Jennings, Bailey, Salling, and 3 co-sponsors (SB 583 – 6 sponsors, all Republican);
Delegates Guyton, Alston, and 17 co-sponsors (HB 1593 – 19 sponsors, bipartisan)
- Senators Guzzone and Zucker (SB 742); Delegates Wolek, Bagnall, and 14 co-sponsors (HB 1445 – 16 sponsors)
- Delegate Feldmark (HB 44); Senator Kagan (SB 29) – Plain Language Ballot Questions, SB 29 passed Senate 44-0
- Delegates Grammer and 35 co-sponsors (HB 964 – 36 sponsors, all Republican)
- Delegate Healey (HB 58, DD Coalition)
- Delegate Bhandari (HB 435, coalition); Senator Jackson (SB 259)
- Delegates Solomon, Shetty, Kaufman, and 16 co-sponsors (HB 1015 / Ralph's Act – 19 sponsors, bipartisan)

Based on the sponsors, co-sponsors, and committee members identified above, our testimony and advocacy during the 2026 legislative session reached an estimated total of approximately 160 to 175 individual legislators, representing a significant portion of the 188-member Maryland General Assembly (141 Delegates and 47 Senators).



People on the Go Maryland advocates rallying at the State House for disability rights

Conclusion

The 2026 legislative session represented a landmark year for People on the Go Maryland. With 30 total testimony submissions across 28 individual bills (including 25 independent and 3 coalition) and 2 budget hearings, we demonstrated that self advocates and systems advocates with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities are a powerful force in Maryland's legislative process.

Key achievements this session include:

- HB 216 (Benefits Exploitation) and SB 140 PASSED both chambers and were enrolled — a major victory protecting people with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities from benefits theft.
- HB 226/SB 22 (Department of Disabilities Housing Programs) PASSED both chambers — establishing critical housing programs.

- HB 311 (School Accessibility and Emergency Planning) PASSED both chambers (House 119-0, Senate 40-0) — ensuring school safety for students with disabilities.
- HB 1008 (Vulnerable Adult Banking Protection Act) PASSED both chambers (House 133-0, Senate 46-0) — protecting vulnerable adults from financial exploitation.
- SB 182 (Adult Protective Services Modifications) PASSED — Returned Passed after the House voted unanimously (120-0).
- HB 1015 (Ralph's Act) PASSED ENROLLED — ensuring expedited eligibility for people with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities who relocate to Maryland.
- HB 297 (High School Diploma Pathways / MDiplomaWorks) passed the Senate Third Reading (42-0) on April 9, 2026.
- SB 29 (Plain Language Ballot Questions) passed the Senate unanimously (44-0) — a victory for accessible elections and people with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities.
- SB 742 (Maryland Protecting People With Disabilities Act) and HB 1445 both advanced significantly, with SB 742 reaching House Second Reading Passed with Amendments and HB 1445 passing the House (132-1).
- HB 310 (Restrictive Housing Protections for People with Intellectual and/or Developmental Disabilities) passed the House (132-0) and crossed over to the Senate.
- We successfully raised concerns about voter ID and election restriction bills (HB 454, HB 462, and HB 964) that would disproportionately affect people with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities, people of color, and other marginalized groups. All three bills stalled in committee.
- POG member Josh Del Close testified before both House and Senate budget subcommittees opposing DDA budget cuts — his first time testifying before a legislative body.
- Tracy Wright (Deputy Director and Director of Training), along with POG members Marlene Hendler and Joanna Weaver, testified on SB 742 alongside Mat Rice, demonstrating the depth of our advocacy team.

- We proposed amendments to multiple bills that would strengthen disability protections, including plain language requirements, supported decision-making recognition, and civil rights safeguards.
- We testified on crossfile versions of key bills in both chambers, doubling our reach and ensuring our voice was heard by both House and Senate committees.
- We participated in coalition efforts with the DD Coalition (HB 58, HB 1015) and the disability community coalition (HB 435), strengthening partnerships across the disability community.

People on the Go Maryland remains committed to our mission of promoting self advocacy and civil rights for those with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities throughout the state. We will continue to build on the momentum of this historic session as we prepare for the 2027 legislative session and beyond.

Acknowledgments

People on the Go Maryland would like to extend our heartfelt thanks to our community partners, members, and sponsors for their unwavering support throughout the 2026 legislative session. Your commitment to civil rights and self advocacy for people with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities makes our work possible.

Prepared by People on the Go Maryland

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Plain Language Addendum

What Did People on the Go Do This Year?

This part of the report is in plain language. It is easy to read. It tells you about 6 big bills we worked on.

What is a bill?

A bill is an idea for a new law. People in the government vote on bills. If enough people vote yes, the bill can become a law. If not enough people vote yes, the bill does not pass.

1. Stopping Benefit Theft (HB 216)

What was this bill about?

Some bad people try to steal money from people with disabilities. They take government help that is not theirs. This bill makes it a crime to steal someone's benefits.

What happened?

This bill passed! Both the House and the Senate voted yes. No one voted no. It is now going to the Governor to be signed into law. This is a big win for people with disabilities.

2. Safe Schools for Kids With Disabilities (HB 311)

What was this bill about?

This bill says schools must check if they are safe for kids with disabilities. If a school is not safe, they have to fix it. This helps kids who use wheelchairs or need extra help get out safe in an emergency.

What happened?

This bill passed! The House voted 119 to 0. The Senate voted 40 to 0. Everyone agreed this was a good idea. It is going to the Governor to be signed into law.

3. Protecting Money in the Bank (HB 1008)

What was this bill about?

Some people try to take money from adults who need extra help. This bill lets banks stop bad transactions. If a bank thinks someone is being tricked, the bank can hold the money to keep it safe.

What happened?

This bill passed! The House voted 133 to 0. The Senate voted 46 to 0. People on the Go helped make sure the bill does not let banks treat people with disabilities unfairly.

4. Housing for People With Disabilities (HB 226)

What was this bill about?

Many people with disabilities need a safe place to live. This bill creates new programs to help people with disabilities find homes. It gives the Department of Disabilities the tools to build housing programs.

What happened?

This bill passed! Both the House and the Senate voted yes. Now the state can start helping more people with disabilities find safe homes.

5. Ralph's Act – Getting Help Faster (HB 1015)

What was this bill about?

When a person with a disability moves to Maryland from another state, they might have to wait a long time to get help. This bill says Maryland must decide faster if they can get services. This way, people do not lose the help they need.

What happened?

This bill passed! The House voted 137 to 0 and the Senate voted 43 to 0. No one voted no. This will help many people and families when they move to Maryland.

6. Easy to Read Ballot Questions (SB 29)

What was this bill about?

When you vote, sometimes there are questions on the ballot. These questions can be hard to read. This bill says the questions must be written in plain language. That means they must use simple words that everyone can understand.

What happened?

The Senate voted yes – all 44 senators said yes! Then the bill went to the House. The House had a hearing but did not vote on it before time ran out. We hope this bill comes back next year so everyone can read the ballot.

What does this mean for you?

People on the Go works hard to make things better for people with disabilities. This year, many good bills passed. These new laws will help keep people safe, give people homes, and make voting easier. People on the Go will keep fighting for your rights.

If you have questions, call or email People on the Go Maryland at info@pogmd.org. We are here to help!