

**DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES ADMINISTRATION BUDGET HEARING****HOUSE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE**

Friday, February 28, 2025, House Office Building, Room 120

Delegate Ben Barnes, Chair

Delegate Mark S. Chang, Vice Chair

Health and Social Services Subcommittee

Delegate Emily Shetty, Chair

Delegate Dana Jones, Vice Chair

Please accept the following as the written testimony of Service Coordination, Inc. regarding the Developmental Disabilities Administration (DDA) budget proposal for FY2026.

**Introduction:**

SCI is a leading non-profit organization providing award-winning case management services and advocacy for more than 16,000 individuals with disabilities and medically complex needs, across Maryland. SCI's mission is to help people with intellectual and developmental disabilities understand their choices and create pathways to community resources that respect their dignity and rights.

SCI provides support to individuals through case management, person-centered planning, and the coordination of comprehensive services related to housing, employment, relationships, financial management, health monitoring, and recreation. Case managers often serve as the initial contact for people seeking services, providing crucial guidance throughout the complex application and eligibility determination and redetermination processes. Case managers assist people in understanding the criteria and requirements, help them gather the necessary documentation and submit the eligibility recommendation. Case managers engage with people and their families to explore their unique wants and needs, facilitating the development of a person-centered plan that reflects the person's preferences and goals. They play a pivotal role in connecting people to essential supports and services, addressing various aspects of the person's life and promoting overall well-being. After services are initiated, case managers continue to monitor the delivery of those services to ensure they align with the person-centered plan. They advocate for the person's preferences and needs, addressing any issues that arise.

**Concerns About the DDA Budget Proposal:**

The Governor's DDA budget includes essential funding for services to people with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities. We have the privilege of witnessing first-hand the powerful impact that services have on a person to support them to pursue their good life and engage with their communities in meaningful ways.

SCI supports funding for the Developmental Disabilities Administration (DDA) and we appreciate the decision to restore 94% of the planned cost containment measures for FY2025. We write to express our concerns regarding the \$457 million dollar proposed budget cuts to DDA funding planned for FY2026 and the negative impact on people with disabilities across the state. Further, The Maryland Department of Health (MDH) Developmental Disabilities Administration (DDA), Department of Legislative Services analysis recommended eliminating the provider rate increase of 1% in the fiscal 2026 allowance, which SCI strongly opposes. While some cost savings may be anticipated, we encourage a longer-range view, as more immediate cuts may result in increased costs in the long run and may diminish the quality and availability of essential supports and services that people with disabilities need. There are also potential cost shifting consequences, whereby some costs within DDA may be reduced, but spending actually increases. For example, certain DDA budget cuts may lead to higher instances of institutionalizations, hospitalizations, emergency interventions, and long-term care placements, which could far exceed the initial savings. Further, ineffective implementation of proposed budget cuts may lead to significant confusion and administrative burden on service providers, diverting their limited resources away from direct service and support for people with disabilities. Consequently, both the state and local communities could find themselves in a significantly worse position, compromising the well-being and quality of life of Marylanders with intellectual and developmental disabilities. As a result, we are not only risking the health and safety of some of our most vulnerable citizens, but we also run the risk of increasing long-term costs due to potentially worsened outcomes.

Accordingly, we ask the following:

1. Prioritize the budget of the DDA by preserving funding levels in FY25 and FY26 that support essential services for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Give careful consideration of the disproportionate impact cuts will have on this vulnerable population and the skilled professionals that provide critical services and support.
2. We strongly encourage the committee to decline DLS's recommendation to eliminate the provider rate increase of 1%. Please ensure adequate rates for home and community-based providers as they are essential to ensuring that MDH and community service providers can continue to provide vital support that enables people to live and work in their communities.
3. Encourage collaboration with key stakeholders, including case management, community service providers, people and families with lived experience and advocacy groups to develop alternative strategies to increase efficiency and minimize negative impact on people with disabilities and their families.
4. Support the development of detailed implementation plans for cost containment measures and safety nets that outline specific strategies to avoid compounding existing issues and ensure that measures do not adversely affect the health and safety of people with disabilities.

We value the collaboration with the MDH-DDA and will continue to work with the Department on strategies to provide appropriate high-quality services to individuals served.