



NEWS RELEASE

HOWARD COUNTY COUNCIL

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT: Eric Solomon – Public Information Officer
esolomon@howardcountymd.gov
(410) 313-1143

Councilmembers Ball & Terrasa File Legislation to Study Disability Services in the County Related to Education, Peer Relationships, Employment, Transportation, and Housing

Ellicott City, MD (January 25, 2018) – Today, Howard County Councilmembers Calvin Ball and Jen Terrasa filed legislation to have the Howard County Commission on Disability Issues research, review, and prepare a report for the County Council and County Executive on best practices in the area of disabilities services, specifically in the areas of Education, Peer Relationships, Employment, Transportation, and Housing, with recommendations on how Howard County Government can support and facilitate full inclusion of all residents in all aspects of community life.

“Our inclusiveness as a community and the accessibility of our institutions, services, and resources are critical priorities on which we must continually seek to improve,” said Dr. Ball. “This legislation will provide the County a much-needed overview of where we stand on disability services, and help us to better understand the issues moving forward to help ensure that Howard County is the absolute best place to live, work, and play regardless of one’s ability.”

In 1988, the County Council passed Council Bill 40-1988, which established the Howard County Commission on Disability Issues to increase public awareness of disability-related issues, serve in an advisory capacity on County Government programs, policies, and budget, and assist County Government to ensure compliance with the requirements of Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990.

"As a commissioner, I am dedicated to our charge to identify and inform our county leaders of what we perceive to be the needs of people with disabilities," said Ande Kolp, Chairperson of the Howard County Commission on Disability Issues. "This includes identifying barriers that could impede a person's access to fully and equitably live, learn, work, play, and worship, and making recommendations for the removal of those barriers, utilizing information gathered and applying best practices."

Section 12.401(h)(2)(ii) of the Howard County Code states that one of the duties of the Commission is to, “Advise the County Executive and County Council on the needs, inequalities, unmet needs, and gaps in such areas as housing, transportation, recreation, employment, education, community services, treatment, rehabilitation and related matters, which may preclude the full integration of persons with disabilities into the community.”

“This is a community that is far too often and too easily overlooked,” said Terrasa. “When barriers prevent their full participation in and contribution to our society, we are all diminished. Because barriers to participation are often exponentially harder to overcome for people with disabilities, we must work that much more diligently to seek their feedback on infrastructure and service changes the County can make to remove those barriers, and do what is necessary to make improvements.”

-more-

The proposed legislation also requests that all units of County government, the Howard County Public School System, and Howard Community College fully cooperate with the Commission on Disability Issues as it conducts the studies.

A report and recommendations from the Commission would be due to the County Council and County Executive by October 1, 2018.

The proposed legislation, Council Resolution 23-2018, will be introduced at the Council's legislative session on February 5, 2018. Testimony will be accepted at the regularly scheduled public hearing on February 20. To sign up to testify, visit <https://apps.howardcountymd.gov/otestimony/>. If you would like to submit your testimony electronically, email councilmail@howardcountymd.gov.

###