People On the Go Maryland

2027 Legislative Platform

Note: *A complete Plain Language version of this document, and a Plain Language Glossary, are also available as separate companion documents. If you see a word or phrase you do not understand, please look for it in the Glossary.*

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About People On the Go

People On the Go Maryland is an independent nonprofit organization. It is run for and by people with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities. We are a self-advocacy and systems advocacy organization. Our mission is to promote civil rights for people with disabilities across the state of Maryland and around the country.

People On the Go is a nonpartisan organization. That means we do not support or oppose any political party. We work with leaders from all parties to fight for the rights of people with disabilities. We care about the issues, not the party.

People On the Go is also a religiously neutral organization. That means we do not take a position on religion. We respect the right of every person to believe or not believe, however they choose. Some of our members and leaders have deep religious faith. Others do not. We welcome everyone, no matter what they believe or do not believe.

This matters for People On the Go because we serve people with many different backgrounds and beliefs. Our mission is about civil rights, not religion. We do not want any member to feel unwelcome because of their faith or their lack of faith.

This also matters for people with disabilities more broadly. People with disabilities have the right to make their own spiritual choices, just like everyone else. Sometimes, people with disabilities are told what to think or believe by the people who care for them. People On the Go believes this is wrong. Your faith, or your choice not to have a faith, belongs to you. No one should take that away from you.

This is especially important right now. There are many public debates about the role of religion in government and public life. People On the Go stays out of those debates. Our work is about civil rights for people with disabilities, and we welcome people of all faiths and no faith as part of that work.

This platform explains what People On the Go supports and what we oppose. These are our positions on the issues. They are not tied to any political party.

Section 1: Closing Institutions

There are two institutions still open in Maryland: Potomac Center and Holly Center. Maryland is in a budget crisis. People On the Go and its members believe that Maryland would be a healthier place if it eventually became an institution-free state.

In 1999, the U.S. Supreme Court decided a case called Olmstead v. L.C. This decision said that keeping people with disabilities in institutions when they do not need to be there, is a form of discrimination. The Court said states should serve people in the most integrated setting possible. That means living in a home and being part of the community, not locked away in a facility.

People On the Go supports the Olmstead decision and believes it should be protected. We believe that, with the right supports, people can live in the community rather than in an institution.

People On the Go opposes budget cuts at the federal, state, or local level that reduce funding for community-based supports and services. Cuts like these can push people into more restrictive settings like nursing homes and institutions. We believe this outcome is harmful.

On August 31, 2026, a group of leading national disability organizations — including The Arc of the United States, the ACLU, and others — issued a statement about a legal case called *Texas v. Kennedy*. People On the Go agrees with the perspective and concerns expressed in that statement.

Here is what happened. The U.S. Department of Justice, on behalf of the Department of Health and Human Services, along with the states of Texas, Florida, and Alaska, asked a federal court to erase the community integration rules from federal disability law. These rules are part of the regulations that carry out Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act. Section 504 is a federal law passed in 1973. It says that any program or agency that receives federal money cannot discriminate against people with disabilities. The community integration rules have been part of federal law since 1977. They protect the right of people with disabilities to live in their own homes and communities — not in institutions.

People On the Go does not approve of this action.

We say this not as a partisan statement. People from across the political spectrum have long supported the right of people with disabilities to live in the community. This is a civil rights issue, not a political one.

The Preamble to the United States Constitution states that one of the purposes of the federal government is to "promote the general Welfare." People On the Go believes that protecting the right of people with disabilities to live in their communities is exactly what promoting the general welfare means. When the federal government removes protections that have been in place for nearly fifty years, it is not upholding this constitutional responsibility. It is walking away from it.

The organizations that issued this statement made something important clear: this proposed resolution cannot change the Americans with Disabilities Act or Section 504 itself. Only Congress has the power to change the law. But removing the community integration rules from federal regulations still does real harm. It signals that the federal government will no longer enforce these rights — and that leaves people with disabilities more vulnerable.

The federal government has a duty to protect the people it serves — all of them, including people with disabilities. People On the Go stands with the national disability organizations that issued this statement. We agree that community integration is a right, not a privilege. We believe the federal government must uphold that right.

Section 2: Access to Housing

People On the Go believes housing is a fundamental right. When a person has housing that is safe, affordable, and open to all, regardless of disability, race, income, or background, their life improves in every way.

People On the Go supports expanding access to housing. We oppose anything that makes housing more expensive, harder to get, or less welcoming.

We also oppose any action that makes it harder for people who are unhoused or have disabilities to find fair housing.

Section 3: Artificial Intelligence and Assistive Technology

People On the Go believes people with disabilities should have access to artificial intelligence (AI) and other assistive technology, if they choose. These tools can support independence.

However, access to AI or assistive technology does not replace the need for Direct Support Professionals (DSPs). For people who are blind, have physical disabilities that affect their hands, or are new to a job and need a person present, human support may be needed even more.

People On the Go opposes the practice of DDA's regional offices requiring extra steps or documentation that are not specifically required by the waiver or by regulations. The Developmental Disabilities Administration (DDA) is the state agency that supports approximately 18,000 or more Marylanders with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities. Right now, DDA's regional office reviewers sometimes require a fading plan for job supports even when that requirement is not written in the waiver or in state regulations. People On the Go believes this is wrong.

It is our position that when a person has been receiving ongoing job supports, awake overnight supports, or any other support to stay safe and independent, they should not have to provide extra proof that is not required by the waiver or by regulation. We believe the support should continue as long as the person needs it. People On the Go strongly

recommends that DDA's regional offices stop requiring anything that is not specifically called for in the waiver or in regulations.

Section 4: Supporting Non-Neurotypical People in the Workplace

People On the Go recognizes that many people with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities are also non-neurotypical. This includes people with autism, ADHD, and other types of support needs that affect how a person thinks, learns, and communicates. Non-neurotypical people bring real strengths to the workplace. But they may also need specific, ongoing supports to stay employed.

These supports are not temporary. A person who needs a job coach, a communication aid, or help with workplace routines may need that support for as long as they are employed. People On the Go believes it is important to recognize this. We do not believe agencies and employers should assume these needs will go away over time.

It is our position that a fading plan for job supports should not be required for non-neurotypical individuals unless that requirement is clearly written in the waiver. People On the Go supports ongoing job coaching, structured routines, and other supports for as long as the person needs them. Removing these supports without the person's consent undermines their right to work.

Section 5: The DDA Budget

DDA supports more than 18,000 people with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities and their families. We know Maryland is facing a budget crisis. But these are vital services, and People On the Go is concerned about the impact of continued cuts on the people who depend on them.

People On the Go believes there are ways to reduce unnecessary administrative burden instead of cutting services. For example, one option would be to end the use of the Supports Intensity Scale (SIS), which many people with disabilities find offensive and inappropriate. Another option

would be to allow Coordinators of Community Services to conduct some quarterly monitoring visits online, as a choice for those who prefer it.

People On the Go is also concerned that individual person-centered plans have become too long and too hard to understand. Right now, these plans are often too long and incomprehensible to the people receiving supports, their supporters, and others who rely on them. People On the Go strongly recommends that person-centered plans be made shorter and written in plain language, so that the person and their supporters can actually read and use them.

Section 6: The Right to Object to Assessments

People On the Go supports the right of people with developmental disabilities, their families, and their supporters to object to specific assessments, including the Supports Intensity Scale (SIS), on the grounds of personal discomfort or deeply held values. No person should be forced to participate in an assessment they find offensive, dehumanizing, or harmful to their sense of dignity.

People On the Go supports a clear process that allows individuals and families to formally object to an assessment without losing access to services. We believe an alternative method of determining support needs should be offered. Objecting to an assessment should never be used as a reason to reduce or deny services.

People On the Go strongly supports protecting this right.

Section 7: Direct Support Professional Wages

People On the Go opposes cuts to the wages of Direct Support Professionals (DSPs). This applies whether a person is in the provider-supported model or the self-directed model, where the person is considered to be the employer of record.

Costs are going up every day. Many DSPs already work two or three jobs just to get by. A pay cut would make their lives even harder. Because of the ongoing situation in the Middle East and other economic factors, People On

the Go believes that cuts to DSP wages and to developmental disability supports as a whole would be very harmful.

People On the Go is not specifically saying that DSPs who are family members should be paid the same wages as DSPs who are not family members. However, family members who work as paid staff should not automatically be up for consideration to have their wages reduced just because they are family. People On the Go strongly recommends that family DSPs not be singled out for a pay cut simply because of their relationship to the person they support.

Section 8: Access to Healthcare

People On the Go believes healthcare is a fundamental right for everyone, with or without a disability. We support expanding access to healthcare and protecting each person's right to choose the treatments or procedures that are best for them.

People On the Go opposes anything that takes away access to healthcare. We also support reproductive rights. Every woman has the right to choose whether or not to have a child. People On the Go believes this right should be protected.

Section 9: Prescription Drugs

Access to prescription drugs is part of access to healthcare. People with disabilities often depend on medication to stay healthy and live in the community. In Maryland, Medicaid covers prescription drugs for many people with disabilities. But coverage can change, and drug costs keep going up.

People On the Go supports keeping prescription drugs affordable and accessible. We oppose anything that raises drug costs, restricts coverage, or makes it harder for people with disabilities to get the medicine they need.

Section 10: Mental Health

Many people with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities also have mental health support needs. Research shows that between one-third and one-half of people with IDD have mental health support needs at some point in their lives. When a person has both a developmental disability and a mental health support need, this is sometimes called a dual diagnosis.

Getting the right supports can be difficult. Doctors and others sometimes mistake signs of a mental health support need for behaviors related to a person's disability. This is called diagnostic overshadowing, and it means people do not always get the help they need.

Mental health services and developmental disability services are often run by different agencies. People On the Go believes these systems work best when they work together. People with IDD deserve access to mental health supports that are adapted to their needs and provided with respect.

People On the Go supports improving access to mental health supports for people with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities. We oppose anything that denies mental health supports based on a person's disability status or IQ score. We believe that integrated, coordinated supports for people with a dual diagnosis are very important.

Section 11: Self-Directed Services

Maryland's DDA offers two models of service. In the self-directed model, a person gets a budget and chooses who works for them, how much they are paid, and what training they receive. In the provider-supported model, a person works with an agency to have their needs met.

People On the Go believes both models are equal. They have similar but not the same challenges. We believe people who use both models should have an equal say when decisions are made about pay rates, services, or other changes.

Section 12: Family as Staff

People On the Go believes that no matter which service model a person uses, they should have the right to choose a family member as their paid staff, if they want. We know this is a sensitive issue and must be carefully monitored. But the right to choose who helps with the most personal parts of your life is fundamental and should not be taken from anyone.

Section 13: Natural Supports

A family member or friend may help someone with certain things without being paid. That is a natural support. But People On the Go does not believe family and friends should be expected to give this support for free just to save the state money.
It may be natural to take someone to a doctor's appointment once in a while. But if one person does this all the time and is not paid, that becomes a burden. Expecting unpaid support just because someone is family or a friend can damage or destroy those relationships. People On the Go opposes any approach that relies on unpaid natural supports to cut costs.

Section 14: Marriage Equality and the Marriage Penalty

People On the Go supports marriage equality for everyone, including people with disabilities. Every person has the right to love and to build a life with the person they choose. People with disabilities should never have to choose between getting married and keeping the supports they need to live.

Right now, federal rules create what is called a "marriage penalty" for people who receive Supplemental Security Income (SSI). When two SSI recipients get married, their combined monthly payment is reduced by about 25 percent compared to what they would receive as two single people. The rules also consider a spouse's income when deciding how much SSI a person can get. This can cause a person to lose their benefits entirely when they marry.

People On the Go believes this is not fair. The Social Security Administration's asset limits for people receiving SSI have not been updated since the 1980s. A single person can only have $2,000 in savings.

A married couple can only have $3,000 combined. These limits are out of date, and they penalize people for getting married.

People On the Go believes the marriage penalty for people with disabilities should be a thing of the past. No one should have to give up their rights or their supports in order to get married.

Section 15: Access to Education

People On the Go supports access to education for people with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities at all levels. We especially support access to college, vocational training, and trade programs.

People On the Go opposes placing students with developmental disabilities on a non-diploma track. This can close the door to employment and independence later in life.

Section 16: Protecting the ADA and Landmark Disability Laws

Along with the Olmstead decision, People On the Go believes it is important to protect the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and other landmark laws that protect the civil rights of people with disabilities.

The ADA was signed in 1990. It does not allow discrimination in employment, government services, public spaces, and transportation. It has helped millions of people with disabilities live, work, and be part of their communities. People On the Go opposes any effort to weaken, repeal, or roll back the ADA or any other law that protects disability rights.

Section 17: LGBTQ+ Rights

People On the Go proudly supports the rights of LGBTQ+ people, including people with disabilities who identify as LGBTQ+. We support full and equal civil rights for all LGBTQ+ individuals. We oppose any effort to discriminate against or harm members of the LGBTQ+ community.

Section 18: Subminimum Wage / Section 14(c)

Thanks to the Ken Capone Equal Employment Act, passed in Maryland in 2016 and named after our own Ken Capone, Maryland no longer allows employers to pay people with disabilities less than minimum wage. Maryland was only the second state in the country to do this.

However, this practice still happens in many other states under Section 14(c) of the federal Fair Labor Standards Act. People On the Go supports ending this practice everywhere. We believe people with disabilities deserve real employment opportunities that pay a fair wage.

Section 19: Voting Rights

Voting is a fundamental right. People On the Go supports making voting easier and more accessible for people with disabilities. This includes mail-in ballots, ballots and instructions written in plain language, curbside voting, accessible voting machines, and the right to get help from a person of your choice.

Federal laws like the ADA and the Help America Vote Act already protect many of these rights. People On the Go believes these protections are important.

People On the Go opposes anything that would make it harder for people with disabilities to vote. We believe access to the ballot box should never be taken away.

People On the Go also supports the John Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act. This is a federal law that Congress has been working to pass. It is named after John Lewis, a civil rights leader and longtime member of Congress who spent his life fighting for the right of all people to vote.

The original Voting Rights Act was passed in 1965. It was one of the most important civil rights laws in American history. It made it illegal to use rules or practices that stopped people — especially Black Americans and other people of color — from voting. Over the years, court decisions have made this law weaker. The John Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act would restore and strengthen those protections.

People On the Go supports this act because voting rights are disability rights. Many of the same barriers that make it harder for people of color to vote also make it harder for people with disabilities to vote. Strong voting rights protections help everyone. Weakening those protections harms everyone, including people with disabilities.

People On the Go believes that every citizen deserves the right to vote, and that right must be protected for all people, no matter who they are.

Section 20: Police Relations, First Responders, and Disability Registries

During the last legislative session, Eric's ID Law was passed. This law allows people to put a disability designation on their Maryland state ID if they choose. People On the Go had serious concerns about this law, even though our leaders were divided on the issue.

Now that the law has passed, People On the Go believes important questions remain. Who can see this information? Will the people who chose this option be told when the federal government, or anyone else, asks for or demands access to it? How will people be protected?

People On the Go strongly recommends that more people be told about voluntary disclosure cards, sometimes called the blue card. This card lets a person tell a police officer or first responder about their communication needs or other supports. Carrying this card is always a choice, never a requirement; neither is it put into a database.

People On the Go opposes the trend of tracking people with disabilities in databases. We believe the Ethan Saylor Alliance, which trains law enforcement to interact safely with people who have intellectual and developmental disabilities, is a valuable resource, and People On the Go strongly recommends that it receive additional funding. We believe de-escalation training is a better path than registries.

People On the Go does not specifically oppose the creation of special teams or units within police departments or other first responder agencies that are trained to help non-neurotypical people during emergencies. However,

we have a serious concern. When these specialized teams exist, the public and other officers may come to expect that only those teams handle situations involving people with disabilities. This can lead to delays in help and can unintentionally separate people with disabilities further from the rest of the community. People On the Go believes all first responders should have basic disability awareness training, not just a small group.

People On the Go opposes any move to make disability registries mandatory, whether for people living on their own or with provider support.

We also oppose any requirement that community providers publicly disclose where group homes are located. This creates a Not in My Backyard attitude that harms people with disabilities. Your home is your home. As long as you are not hurting anyone or disrupting your neighborhood, no one should bother you.

Section 21: Data Privacy

People On the Go believes that the personal information of people with disabilities, and all people, must be protected. Data privacy is a civil rights issue.

People with disabilities often have to share private health and personal information to get the supports and services they need. This information must be kept safe. It must not be shared, sold, or used in ways the person did not agree to.

Technology is changing fast. Assistive devices, government systems, and online services collect large amounts of personal data. Research shows that many of these systems do not have strong privacy protections for people with disabilities. Privacy policies are often written in complicated language that is hard to understand. This makes it hard for people to know how their information is being used.

People On the Go supports strong data privacy protections for everyone, especially people with disabilities. We support writing privacy policies in plain language. We oppose any government or private system that tracks,

surveys, or shares the personal information of people with disabilities without their clear and informed consent.

We are especially concerned about the growing use of automated systems to make decisions about who gets services and benefits. People On the Go believes these systems should be transparent, fair, and open to challenge. A computer should never make a final decision about a person's life without human review.

Section 22: The DDA Waiting List

Too many people with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities in Maryland are waiting for supports they need. This waiting list is too long and too slow. People On the Go supports making the DDA waiting list shorter and easier to navigate. We want more people to get access to the supports they need, faster.

People On the Go especially supports faster access for transitioning youth, young people who are aging out of school and moving into what we call adult services and supports. This transition can be overwhelming. We believe it should be as smooth and fast as possible so that no young person is left without support the moment they leave school.

People On the Go opposes anything that makes it harder or slower for people to access DDA services.

Section 23: Access to Transportation

People On the Go believes that access to transportation is a fundamental right. Without reliable transportation, people with disabilities cannot get to work, school, medical appointments, or take part in their communities.

People On the Go supports transportation that is safer, more affordable, and more reliable for people with disabilities. We especially support transportation that crosses county lines. Right now, many services stop at the county border. This is a serious barrier for people who need to travel across Maryland for work, medical care, or other reasons.

People On the Go opposes anything that reduces access to transportation, makes it more expensive, or fails to serve people across county lines.

Section 24: Communication Access and Plain Language

People On the Go believes that everyone has the right to understand and to be understood. Information about services, rights, and supports should be easy to find and easy to understand for all people with disabilities.

People On the Go supports plain language access for people with disabilities. Plain language means writing and speaking in a clear, simple way, so that people can understand important information. Documents like person-centered plans, privacy policies, ballots, and letters about services should be written in plain language.

People On the Go also supports full communication access for people who need it in other ways. This includes people for whom English is not their first language, people who are deaf or hard of hearing, and people who have other communication or linguistic support needs. These supports may include interpreters, sign language, translated materials, captioning, and assistive communication devices.

No one should lose access to their rights, services, or supports because information was not shared in a way they could understand. People On the Go strongly recommends that state agencies, providers, and others make plain language and communication access a regular part of how they share information.

Section 25: Humane Treatment of People in ICE Custody

People On the Go believes that all people deserve to be treated with dignity and respect. This includes people who are held by Immigration and Customs Enforcement, also known as ICE.

ICE is a federal agency that enforces immigration laws. Sometimes, people are held in ICE detention facilities while their immigration cases are decided. These facilities are a kind of jail. Stays can last weeks, months, or even longer.

People with disabilities are among those who are sometimes held in ICE detention. These facilities are not always set up to meet the needs of people with disabilities. People may not get the medical care or mental health supports they need. They may not have access to communication supports. Language barriers can make disability-related needs even harder to address.

People On the Go believes that every person held in ICE custody has the right to be treated humanely. That means access to healthcare, including mental health supports. That means access to communication supports for people who need them. That means not being punished, isolated, or mistreated simply for having a disability or for needing help.

This is not a partisan issue. It is a human rights issue. People with disabilities are especially vulnerable in any kind of detention setting. How we treat people who cannot easily speak for themselves says a great deal about who we are as a society. People On the Go believes that humane treatment must never be taken away, no matter who a person is or where they come from.

Section 26: Solitary Confinement in Prisons and Jails

People On the Go opposes the use of solitary confinement in prisons and jails.

Solitary confinement means keeping a person alone in a very small space, with little or no contact with other people. This can last for hours, days, or much longer. In some cases, people spend weeks or months in solitary.

Research clearly shows that solitary confinement causes serious harm to a person's mental health. Even people who were mentally healthy before, can develop serious mental health problems after time in solitary. Anxiety, depression, and confusion are common. Some people develop psychosis. Psychosis means losing touch with what is real. A person may hear or see things that are not there. They may become very afraid, very confused, or unable to think clearly. These effects can last for a long time, even after a person is no longer in solitary confinement.

People with intellectual and developmental disabilities are especially at risk. People with existing mental health support needs often become much worse. Isolation can turn a manageable situation into a serious crisis.

People On the Go believes that using solitary confinement as a form of punishment is cruel and harmful. There are better ways to address safety concerns in prisons and jails. Those ways should not cause lasting damage to a person's mind.

People On the Go supports ending or sharply limiting the use of solitary confinement, especially for people with disabilities and people with mental health support needs.

Section 27: Medical Aid in Dying

Medical aid in dying is when a person who is seriously ill asks a doctor for medicine to end their life. This is sometimes called death with dignity or physician-assisted death. It is a very sensitive and personal issue.

People On the Go takes a neutral position on medical aid in dying. We do not support it, and we do not oppose it. Here is why.

People On the Go strongly believes that every person has the right to make their own healthcare decisions. We also support reproductive rights, which means the right to make personal decisions about your own body and health. If we say that people have the right to choose their own medical treatments, we cannot then say that a person does not have the right to make this decision about the end of their life. These two positions need to be consistent with each other.

At the same time, People On the Go is very aware that people with disabilities have a long history of being told that their lives are less valuable or not worth living. We take very seriously the risk that such a law could be misused or poorly carried out in ways that harm people with disabilities. These concerns are real, and they matter.

Our leadership is divided on this issue. The disability community as a whole is also divided. Some people feel strongly that medical aid in dying should be a personal choice. Others feel just as strongly that it puts vulnerable

people at risk. Both views come from deeply held values and real lived experience.

Because of this, People On the Go does not take a public position on medical aid in dying. However, if such legislation were ever to pass in Maryland or anywhere else in the country, People On the Go would carefully monitor how it is put into practice. We would want to make sure that the right to informed consent is fully protected for every person.

Informed consent means that a person fully understands what they are agreeing to before they agree to it. They must not be pressured. They must have all the information they need, in a form they can understand. They must make their choice freely, on their own, without anyone pushing them. No person should ever be moved toward this choice because of their disability, because of the cost of their care, or because someone else believes their life is not worth living.

Just as with religion, members of People On the Go have the right to hold and share their own personal views on medical aid in dying. When they do so, they speak for themselves only, not for the organization.

Section 28: All of These Are Civil Rights

Every issue in this platform, housing, healthcare, education, voting, employment, transportation, data privacy, communication access, and community living, is a civil rights issue.

People with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities are full citizens. We have the same rights as anyone else. When someone is denied access to housing, healthcare, or a fair wage because of their disability, that is discrimination. When someone is forced into an institution because there are no community supports, that is a civil rights violation.

People On the Go will fight for civil rights in every area of life, in the statehouse, in the courts, and in the community. We will not stop until every person with a disability is treated with the dignity, respect, and equality they deserve.