People On the Go Maryland

2027 Legislative Platform

PLAIN LANGUAGE VERSION

Note: *This is the Plain Language Version of the People On the Go 2027 Legislative Platform. The full version is a separate document. A Plain Language Glossary also published as a separate companion document.*

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About People On the Go

People On the Go Maryland is a nonprofit organization. It is led by people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. We stand up for civil rights for people with disabilities in Maryland and across the country.

People On the Go does not support any political party. We work with leaders from all parties. We care about rights for people with disabilities, not politics.

People On the Go does not take a side on religion. We respect everyone's right to believe what they choose. Some of our members have strong religious faith. Others do not. Everyone is welcome here.

We serve people with many different backgrounds. Our mission is civil rights. We do not want anyone to feel left out because of their faith or beliefs.

People with disabilities have the right to make their own spiritual choices. Sometimes people are told what to believe by the people who care for them. People On the Go believes that is wrong. Your beliefs are your own.

There are many public debates about religion and government right now. People On the Go stays out of those debates. Our work is about civil rights. People of all faiths, and people with no faith, are welcome.

This document explains what People On the Go supports and what we oppose. These are our positions. They are not connected to any political party.

Section 1: Closing Institutions

Two institutions are still open in Maryland. They are called Potomac Center and Holly Center. Maryland is in a budget crisis. People On the Go believes Maryland should become a state without any institutions.

In 1999, the U.S. Supreme Court made a ruling called the Olmstead decision. It said that keeping people with disabilities in institutions when they do not need to be there is a form of discrimination. The Court said people should be served in the most integrated setting possible. That means living at home and being part of the community.

People On the Go supports the Olmstead decision. We believe it must be protected. With the right supports, people can live in the community instead of an institution.

People On the Go opposes cuts to funding for community supports and services. Cuts can push people into nursing homes or institutions. We believe that outcome is harmful.

On August 31, 2026, a group of national disability organizations issued a statement. The group included The Arc of the United States, the ACLU, and others. The statement was about a legal case called Texas v. Kennedy. People On the Go agrees with that statement.

Here is what happened. The U.S. Department of Justice asked a federal court to erase rules about community integration. These rules are part of Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act. Section 504 says that programs receiving federal money cannot discriminate against people with disabilities. The community integration rules have been in place since 1977. They protect the right of people with disabilities to live in their own homes — not in institutions.

People On the Go does not approve of this action.

This is not a partisan issue. People from all sides of the political spectrum have long supported community integration. This is a civil rights issue, not a political one.

The U.S. Constitution says one purpose of the federal government is to promote the general welfare. People On the Go believes that protecting community integration is part of that duty. Removing protections that have been in place for nearly fifty years is walking away from that responsibility.

The disability organizations made something clear. This court action cannot change the ADA or Section 504. Only Congress can change those laws. But removing the rules from federal regulations still causes harm. It signals that the federal government will no longer enforce these rights. That leaves people with disabilities more vulnerable.

The federal government must protect all the people it serves. That includes people with disabilities. People On the Go stands with the national disability organizations. We believe community integration is a right, not a privilege. The federal government must uphold that right.

Section 2: Access to Housing

People On the Go believes housing is a basic right. Safe, affordable, and accessible housing helps people in every part of their lives.

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 anything 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 be able to use artificial intelligence (AI) and other assistive technology if they want to. AI means computer tools that can do smart tasks. Assistive technology means tools that help people with disabilities do things more easily. These tools can help people be more independent.

But technology does not replace the need for people. Direct Support Professionals (DSPs) are people who are paid to help someone with a

disability. For many people, a human helper is still needed, even with technology.

People On the Go opposes DDA regional offices asking for extra steps or paperwork that are not required by the official waiver or state rules. DDA is the Maryland state agency that supports people with disabilities. People On the Go believes this extra burden is wrong.

If a person has been receiving a support, that support should continue as long as they need it. No extra proof should be required unless it is written in the waiver or in state rules. People On the Go strongly urges DDA regional offices to stop asking for things that are not required.

Section 4: Supporting Non-Neurotypical People in the Workplace

Many people with intellectual and developmental disabilities are also non-neurotypical. Non-neurotypical means a person's brain works differently from what is considered typical. This includes people with autism and ADHD. Non-neurotypical people bring real strengths to the workplace. But they may need specific supports to stay employed.

These supports are not temporary. A person may need a job coach or communication help for as long as they work. People On the Go does not believe these needs will go away over time.

People On the Go believes a fading plan for job supports should only be required if it is written in the waiver. A fading plan is a plan to slowly reduce or stop a support over time. We support ongoing job coaching and structured routines for as long as a person needs them. Taking away these supports without the person's agreement violates their right to work.

Section 5: The DDA Budget

DDA supports more than 18,000 people with disabilities and their families. Maryland is facing a budget crisis. But these services are vital. People On the Go is concerned about what cuts would mean for people who depend on them.

People On the Go believes there are ways to cut administrative costs without cutting services. For example, the state could end the use of the Supports Intensity Scale (SIS). The SIS is an assessment tool. Many people with disabilities find it offensive. Another option is to allow some check-in visits to happen online.

Person-centered plans have become too long and too hard to understand. These plans are supposed to describe a person's supports and goals. But many people cannot read or understand them. People On the Go strongly recommends that these plans be shorter and written in plain language.

Section 6: The Right to Object to Assessments

People On the Go supports the right to say no to certain assessments. This includes the Supports Intensity Scale (SIS). No one should be forced to take part in an assessment they find offensive or harmful to their dignity.

People On the Go supports a clear process for people to formally object to an assessment. An alternative way to measure support needs should always be offered. Saying no to an assessment should never mean losing services. People On the Go strongly supports this right.

Section 7: Direct Support Professional Wages

People On the Go opposes pay cuts for Direct Support Professionals (DSPs). A DSP is a person who is paid to help someone with a disability. This applies in all service models.

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. People On the Go believes cuts to DSP wages would cause serious harm.

People On the Go does not say that family DSPs must be paid the same as other DSPs. But family members who work as paid staff should not be singled out for pay cuts just because they are family. People On the Go strongly recommends that this not happen.

Section 8: Access to Healthcare

People On the Go believes healthcare is a basic right for everyone. We support expanding access to healthcare. We support each person's right to choose their own treatments.

People On the Go opposes anything that takes away access to healthcare. We also support reproductive rights. Every woman has the right to make her own decisions about her body and her health. People On the Go believes this right must be protected.

Section 9: Prescription Drugs

Access to medicine is part of access to healthcare. Many people with disabilities need medication to stay healthy and live in the community. In Maryland, Medicaid helps pay for prescription drugs for many people with disabilities. But coverage can change, and drug costs keep rising.

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

Section 10: Mental Health

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

Getting the right help can be hard. Sometimes doctors mistake signs of a mental health need for behaviors related to a person's disability. This means people do not always get the help they need.

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

People On the Go supports better access to mental health services for people with disabilities. We oppose denying mental health supports based on a person's disability or IQ score. We believe coordinated supports for people with dual diagnoses are very important.

Section 11: Self-Directed Services

Maryland's DDA offers two ways to receive services. In the self-directed model, a person gets a budget and chooses who works for them. In the provider-supported model, an agency manages the person's supports. People On the Go believes both models are equal. People in both models should have an equal voice when decisions are made.

Section 12: Family as Staff

People On the Go believes that in any service model, a person should be able to choose a family member as their paid support staff. 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 a basic right.

Section 13: Natural Supports

A family member or friend may help someone without being paid. That is called a natural support. But People On the Go does not believe families should be expected to provide this help for free just to save the state money. Giving someone a ride to the doctor once in a while is natural. But doing it all the time without pay becomes a burden. Expecting unpaid help just because someone is family or a friend can damage 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 marry the person they love. People with disabilities should never have to choose between getting married and keeping the supports they need.

Right now, federal rules create what is called a marriage penalty. When two people on Supplemental Security Income (SSI) get married, their combined payment goes down by about 25 percent. A spouse's income can also reduce or cut a person's benefits entirely.

People On the Go believes this is not fair. The savings limits for SSI have not been updated since the 1980s. A single person can only save $2,000. A married couple can only save $3,000 together. These limits are out of date.

People On the Go believes the marriage penalty should end. 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 at all levels for people with disabilities. This includes college, vocational training, and trade programs. People On the Go opposes placing students with 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

People On the Go believes it is important to protect the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and other major disability rights laws.
The ADA was signed in 1990. It makes it illegal to discriminate against people with disabilities in jobs, public spaces, transportation, and government services. It has helped millions of people. People On the Go opposes any effort to weaken or repeal the ADA or any other disability rights law.

Section 17: LGBTQ+ Rights

People On the Go supports the full and equal civil rights of LGBTQ+ people, including people with disabilities. We oppose any effort to discriminate against or harm members of the LGBTQ+ community.

Section 18: Subminimum Wage / Section 14(c)

Maryland passed the Ken Capone Equal Employment Act in 2016. This law ended the practice of paying people with disabilities less than minimum wage. Maryland was only the second state in the country to do this.

This practice still happens in other states under Section 14(c) of the federal Fair Labor Standards Act. People On the Go supports ending this practice everywhere. People with disabilities deserve real jobs that pay a fair wage.

Section 19: Voting Rights

Voting is a basic right. People On the Go supports making voting easier and more accessible for people with disabilities. This includes mail-in ballots, plain language instructions, 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 and must be kept.

People On the Go opposes anything that makes it harder for people with disabilities to vote. The right to vote must 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 who spent his life fighting for the right to vote.

The original Voting Rights Act was passed in 1965. It made it illegal to stop people from voting. Court decisions over the years have weakened those protections. The John Lewis Act would restore and strengthen them. People On the Go supports this act because voting rights are disability rights. The same barriers that make it harder for people of color to vote often make it harder for people with disabilities to vote too. Strong voting protections help everyone.

People On the Go believes every citizen deserves the right to vote. 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, Maryland passed Eric's ID Law. This law lets people choose to put a disability label on their Maryland state ID. People On the Go had serious concerns about this law. Our leaders were divided on the issue.

Now that the law has passed, important questions remain. Who can see this information? Will people be told when someone asks to access it? How will people be protected?

People On the Go strongly recommends that more people learn about the voluntary disclosure card, also called the blue card. This card lets a person tell a police officer about their communication needs. Carrying this card is always a choice. It does not create a database record.

People On the Go opposes tracking people with disabilities in databases. We believe the Ethan Saylor Alliance, which trains law enforcement to work safely with people with disabilities, should receive more funding. We believe training is a better approach than registries.

People On the Go does not specifically oppose special trained units in police departments. But we have a concern. If only a small team handles situations involving people with disabilities, other officers may not respond. This can cause dangerous delays. People On the Go believes all first responders should have basic disability awareness training.

People On the Go opposes making disability registries mandatory.

We also oppose requiring community providers to publicly say where group homes are located. Your home is your home. As long as you are not causing harm to anyone, no one should bother you.

Section 21: Data Privacy

People On the Go believes personal information about people with disabilities must be kept safe. Data privacy is a civil rights issue. People with disabilities often have to share private health information to get the supports they need. That information must not be shared, sold, or used without the person's agreement.

Technology is changing fast. Devices, government systems, and online services collect a lot of personal data. Privacy policies are often written in complicated language. This makes it hard to know how your information is being used.

People On the Go supports strong data privacy protections for everyone. We support privacy policies written in plain language. We oppose any system that tracks or shares people's information without their clear agreement.

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

Section 22: The DDA Waiting List

Too many people with disabilities in Maryland are waiting for the supports they need. The waiting list is too long. People On the Go supports making the DDA waiting list shorter and easier to navigate. We want more people to get what they need, faster.

People On the Go especially supports faster access for young people who are leaving school and moving into adult services. This is called

transitioning. It can be an overwhelming time. We believe every young person should have supports in place before they leave school.

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

Section 23: Access to Transportation

People On the Go believes transportation is a basic right. Without reliable transportation, people with disabilities cannot get to work, school, or medical appointments.

People On the Go supports transportation that is safer, more affordable, and more reliable. 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.

People On the Go opposes anything that reduces transportation access or makes it more expensive.

Section 24: Communication Access and Plain Language

People On the Go believes everyone has the right to understand information about their rights and services. Information should be easy to find and easy to understand.

People On the Go supports plain language. Plain language means writing and speaking in a clear, simple way. Documents like service plans, ballots, and privacy policies should use plain language.

People On the Go also supports full communication access. This includes interpreters, sign language, translated materials, captions, and communication devices. This helps people who are deaf or hard of hearing, people whose first language is not English, and people with other communication needs.

No one should lose access to their rights because information was too hard to understand. People On the Go strongly recommends that state agencies and providers use plain language every day.

Section 25: Humane Treatment of People in ICE Custody

People On the Go believes all people deserve to be treated with dignity and respect. This includes people held by ICE, which stands for Immigration and Customs Enforcement.

ICE is a federal agency that enforces immigration laws. Some people are held in ICE detention facilities while their immigration cases are decided. These facilities are like jails. Stays can last weeks, months, or even longer. People with disabilities are sometimes held in ICE detention. These facilities are not always set up for people with disabilities. People may not get medical care or mental health supports. Language barriers can make it even harder to get the help they need.

People On the Go believes every person in ICE custody has the right to be treated humanely. That means access to healthcare, including mental health supports. That means access to communication help. That means not being punished or isolated because of a disability.

This is not a partisan issue. It is a human rights issue. How we treat people who cannot easily speak for themselves says a great deal about who we are. People On the Go believes humane treatment must never be taken away.

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. They have little or no contact with other people. This can last for hours, days, weeks, or much longer.

Research clearly shows that solitary confinement harms a person's mental health. People can develop anxiety, depression, and serious confusion.

Some develop psychosis. Psychosis means losing touch with what is real. A person may hear or see things that are not there. These effects can last a long time, even after a person is no longer in solitary.

People with intellectual and developmental disabilities are especially at risk. People who already have mental health needs often get much worse. Isolation can turn a manageable situation into a serious crisis.

People On the Go believes using solitary confinement as punishment is cruel and harmful. There are better ways to handle 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 solitary confinement, especially for people with disabilities.

Section 27: Medical Aid in Dying

Medical aid in dying is when a very ill person asks a doctor for medicine to end their life. It is also called death with dignity. This is a deeply personal and sensitive 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 every person has the right to make their own healthcare decisions. We support reproductive rights, which means the right to make personal decisions about your body and health. If we say people can make their own medical choices, we must be consistent. That includes decisions about the end of life.

At the same time, People On the Go knows that people with disabilities have often been told their lives are less valuable. We take seriously the risk that such a law could be misused. That concern is real and it matters.

Our leadership is divided on this issue. The broader disability community is also divided. 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. But if such a law were ever passed, we would carefully watch how it is carried out. We would want to make sure the right to informed consent is fully protected for every person.

Informed consent means a person fully understands and freely agrees to a medical decision. They must not be pressured. They must have all the information they need in a form they can understand. No one should ever be pushed toward this choice because of their disability or because someone else believes their life is not worth living.

Just like religion, members of People On the Go have the right to hold their own personal views on this issue. When they share those views, they speak for themselves only, not for the organization.

Section 28: All of These Are Civil Rights

Every topic in this platform is a civil rights issue. Housing, healthcare, education, voting, employment, transportation, data privacy, communication, and community living — all of it matters.

People with intellectual and developmental disabilities are full citizens. We have the same rights as everyone else. When someone is denied access 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 part 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 dignity, respect, and equality.