

## **Easy-to-Read Overview of Public Comments Received on DDA's Proposed 2026 Community Pathways Medicaid Waiver Amendment**

The Maryland Department of Health's Developmental Disabilities Administration (DDA) held a mandatory public comment period from April 29, 2026 through May 28, 2026 on its proposed 2026 Community Pathways Medicaid Waiver Amendment. We received comments from 846 individuals, families, providers, advocacy organizations, support brokers, and others.

Overall, the feedback fell into eight general topic areas. Please note that some of the comments did not directly pertain to the proposed amendment, including several recommendations for which further engagement with stakeholders is needed. These recommendations were not accepted for this amendment but may inform future amendments.

Below is a summary of each topic area (in alphabetical order), and how DDA responded to public input. For the full, extended comments, please see the [Public Comment and State Response Summary](#).

### **Topic 1: Administrative Supports**

#### **What we heard in the public comments**

- Commenters said the proposed language for "Day-to-Day Administrative Support" did not match state budget requirements.

#### **How DDA responded**

- DDA updated the language to align with state law, specifically including activities like household management, scheduling, and money management.

### **Topic 2: Cost Neutrality**

#### **What we heard in the public comments**

- Commenters were worried that the cost calculations were based on past claims rather than actual participant needs and requested independent validation.

#### **How DDA responded**

- DDA explained that these projections are for federal reporting purposes and do not determine individual service authorizations or replace the person-centered planning process.

- The methodology was reviewed and approved by the Center for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS).

### **Topic 3: Family Caregiver Limits (commonly referred to as the 60/40 Rule)**

#### **What we heard in the public comments**

- Commenters opposed this rule, calling it unjustified and stating it ignores individual needs, creates safety risks, and conflicts with the Self-Direction Act.
- Concerns were raised about financial hardship and how the rule applies to in-laws or those living outside the home.

#### **How DDA responded**

- The rule is required by state law, and DDA is adding exceptions for emergencies and unexpected staffing shortages (such as sudden illness or when a worker quits).
- DDA clarified that Paid Time Off or PTO does not count toward the weekly cap.
- The definition of "relative" was updated to include in-laws.

### **Topic 4: Financial Management and Counseling Services (FMCS)**

#### **What we heard in the public comments**

- Participants support moving FMCS costs from participant budgets to DDA, but requested better help desks and clearer guidance.

#### **How DDA responded**

- The change simplifies budget administration, and participants will still have the choice of at least three qualified FMCS providers.

### **Topic 5: Group Homes (Shared Dedicated Hours)**

#### **What we heard in the public comments**

- Commenters were worried that the 30-hour rule for day services would limit access to necessary staff support.
- There were requests for clarification on how this rule affects participants with high medical or behavioral needs.

#### **How DDA responded**

- The rule aligns with current state budget laws.
- DDA clarified that this does not change a participant's ability to get extra staffing if they have specific medical, behavioral, safety, or community integration needs.

## **Topic 6: Individual Providers (Moving from unlicensed to licensed)**

### **What we heard in the public comments**

- There was opposition to ending the use of unlicensed vendors, with concerns about immediate service disruptions, loss of trusted providers, and harm to participants with significant needs.
- Commenters were concerned about the transition to new systems and the impact on small or minority-owned businesses.

### **How DDA responded**

- DDA is providing technical assistance and guidance to help vendors apply for qualified provider status.

## **Topic 7: Service Budget Methodology and Rates**

### **What we heard in the public comments**

- There was concern that rate reductions would hurt the quality of services and create a disincentive to self-direct services.
- Commenters noted that administrative burdens make it difficult to update budgets quickly.

### **How DDA responded**

- The effective date for budget methodology changes was delayed to January 1, 2027, to give families and coordinators more time to prepare.
- DDA noted that the rate methodology is based on standard wage classifications while reflecting the specific costs of the self-directed model.

## **Topic 8: Self-Employed Workers**

### **What we heard in the public comments**

- There was concern that self-employed workers would have lower pay because their rates did not account for business and tax expenses.

### **How DDA responded**

- DDA will adjust the pay rates for individual self-employed providers to include a percentage that covers self-employment taxes.