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2:00-3:30pm

**GUBERNATORIAL CANDIDATES
FORUM ON DISABILITY ISSUES
MARYLAND 2010 GENERAL ELECTION**

**PRESENTED BY
MARYLAND DISABILITIES FORUM**

BWI Marriott
1743 W. Nursery Road
Baltimore, MD 21090

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>> Mr. Ward: Good afternoon. Today is Columbus Day. I can't thank you enough for coming out on a holiday. I was trying to determine whether or not it would be happy Columbus Day? I don't know. But it's a holiday.

[Laughter]

I have my calendar at home. On the calendar, it says "Columbus Day, the last holiday to go fishing before it gets cold."

[Laughter]

I'm glad you all decided not to go fishing and come here as well.

My name is Dave Ward, your moderator today. On behalf of Maryland Disabilities Forum board of directors and our event committee, I welcome you to the forum's 2010 gubernatorial event with our two invited guests, Governor Robert Ehrlich and Governor Martin O'Malley. To each and every one of you in attendance --

[Applause]

To each and every one of you in attendance, please accept our sincere gratitude for your participation in another historical event for Marylanders with disabilities.

We're honored to dedicate today's forum to a couple of dear friends and advocates who have passed away since our last event.

Our founding chairperson and disability advocate, Joel David Myerburg, and former elected official and disability advocate, Lorraine Sheehan, there's not a day that goes by that I miss them both.

I'd like to take a moment to recognize and thank our board of directors, members and staff for the dedicated work on behalf of people with disabilities in making today's forum possible. In particular somebody I haven't seen sweat so much in all my life --

[Laughter]

He wants to change his career from being CEO of Maryland Works to an event manager, Bob Hofmann.

[Applause]

And Amanda Lowery.

[Applause]

I also want to thank the Department of Deaf and Hard of Hearing for our CART, assistance with our CART services and interpreters today.

Would each of our board members and staff please stand up, wave your hands, whatever it takes to be recognized.

[Applause]

Thank you. Before we get started, I want to remind everyone about today's forum and why the activities are so important. The question was asked in the foyer, why the disability community finds it necessary and important to sponsor a gubernatorial forum.

What immediately came to my mind was what many advocates in the disability community learn from an icon in America on disability rights, his name was Justin Dart, and one piece of advice that he left us is certainly very appropriate for answering this question. He said, I quote, "Get

involved in politics as if your life depends on it, because it does."

We're here today because it is critical for the well-being and greater good of over half a million individuals in Maryland with disabilities to be heard. This represents 10% of Maryland's population, and a vast majority of them are voters. Many of us know too well the consequences of political complacency for the lives of those we represent when we are left off the political agenda. In fact, we can do a whole forum on it.

The disability vote is even more substantial when one considers the relationship driven multiplier effect. Others with strong interests in disability issues include family members, friends, support staff, advocacy organizations, service providers, and their board of directors and business partners, medical professionals and employers among others. In general terms, how our state leaders address disability related issues is central to setting a vision and tone for our entire state.

It's people. It's communities. It is so exciting for me to be a part of a societal change process that within our lifetime has seen individuals with disabilities move to higher levels of community integration and participation. And that one of the signs we're making progress is the sheer number of people with disabilities who are now actively involved in the electoral process --

[Applause]

-- attending to the issues and voting. I'm honored to serve as moderator this afternoon on stage with the company of two candidates, each of whom has past experience serving as Maryland governor. We know they are aware how

important disability issues are in Maryland. We're pleased to have both candidates. We welcome them to the stage. In particular we appreciate their commitment to personally be here and participate.

At this time, I'd ask you to show your appreciation and enthusiasm for them as well.

[Applause]

Someone from the media asked me in the hallway if I had any insight I could share with them, but obviously as your moderator I have to be nonpartisan.

However --

[Laughter]

I will share this one tidbit of inside information. One of our governors is very fond of pizza, and the other enjoys having a cold beer.

[Laughter]

Just so you know, I like beer and pizza.

[Laughter]

[Applause]

Now, before we move into the formal presentation for today's events, there are logistics I need to cover with you. Registration, if you have not registered to vote, please do so.

Registration for the event today, if you missed the registration tables on your way in, please make sure that you have done that.

By the way, I want to thank MDLC for manning the voter registration booth today. We appreciate their being here.

Each of the candidates have graciously supplied you with their position paper on disability issues.

Please make sure you leave today with a copy of each candidate's paper. After you read it, share it with somebody that couldn't be here.

Also, without our organizational partners and sponsors, all this could end the program, the Maryland Disability Forum could not be able to put on an event like today without the resources they have provided us.

When you see someone listed in the program that you know, thank them for their support.

Our platinum sponsor today is the Chimes Incorporated. Silver sponsors include --

[Applause]

The League Incorporated, Maryland Works Incorporated, and BSB. Other sponsors, Maryland Addiction Directors Council, the Maryland Association of Community Support Services, the Maryland Disability Law Center, the National Multiple Sclerosis Society, Maryland Chapter.

Also numerous small and individual sponsors that we so much appreciate. Please join me now in showing your appreciation for those sponsors.

[Applause]

I'd like to now review some of the very important rules for today's event. This is a forum. It is not a debate or a town meeting. So the candidates will not be

allowed to direct questions to each other or otherwise engage in debate type banter.

I will be following a process today that should help me fulfill my obligation to you as a moderator. And that is to make sure you leave this ballroom today more informed than when you came in.

[Applause]

Each candidate will have an opportunity for presenting openings remarks, to answer moderator and audience questions and to make closing statements.

The order of their presentations are determined earlier by a coin toss. There are strict time limits for each presentation, and once time limits are -- and our time limits are strictly enforced. Our timekeeper in the front row, Ruth Wideker, will have signs to cue our candidates.

Audience members are asked to be equally respectful of both candidates at all times and refrain from overly positive or negatively raucous comment in response to the candidates' statements.

OK. Let's get to it!

I'd like to begin by asking each candidate to provide opening remarks. They will each have four minutes to do so. The coin toss earlier goes to Governor Ehrlich, who will be first to make opening remarks.

Governor Ehrlich?

[Applause]

>> Gov. Ehrlich: Thank you. Thank you all very much. Good to see you. I brought Mary Kane, the next lieutenant governor of the state. Please. Please.

[Applause]

Thanks for bringing up Joel and Lorraine. My former deputy is here today. My former secretary is not, Kris Cox. But we all bring greetings.

I was a member of Congress and a lady named Kris Cox walked in, said there's earnings limitation on Social Security Act and blind people have 80% unemployment in this country, it dates back to the depression. Can you do something about it?

That really began my experience with this community. Not just the blind, with this community generally. I became one of your champions in Congress and continued that process and that support throughout my tenure as governor of this state.

Some of you will recall, hopefully, my first state of the state address. Of course you all remember that one.

[Laughter]

It was called Faces of Maryland. I wanted to make a point to people. I wanted to make a point to 6 million citizens of Maryland by taking five representative folks from around the state and saying, You know what? This is the face of Maryland. One of my faces was named Michael Taylor.

Michael Taylor had been locked up in two states. He had been locked up because he had a disability, and two states thought he could not prosper, he could not work, he could not take care of himself.

He was my guest at my first state of the state because Michael Taylor is a great American success story. He got out of that second

state, Maryland, and went to work and took care of his transportation needs and paid his rent and secured a job and became empowered, and we all celebrate. People around the state said, You know what? That's pretty cool. I said, That's the law. That's the law. That's cool, it's cool. Michael is a cool person.

We enjoyed the most aggressive administration in Maryland history with regard to people with disabilities, because we cared. I don't deserve a medal for it, it's a fact. I'm proud to come here today and repeat not just our record with regard to Congress and the state, and the legislature and my administration as governor, but also going forward.

This election is not about two personalities. It's about two different approaches, philosophical approaches. Today we talk about people with disabilities.

Our approach going forward will be the same as it was four years ago. Or eight years ago I should say. Are people better off with regard to the initiative? Are parents supported? Is the appropriate educational setting in place? Is technology available? Are behavioral needs being met with regard to this particular person?

Concerning our record, we funded Medicaid buy-in. They said it couldn't be done. We did it. As a result, 700 Marylanders with disabilities went to work, continue to work and they're tax-paying citizens. And good for them, good for us as a state.

Employment pilots extended people with traumatic brain injury and transitioning youth. We inherited one of the worst paratransit systems

in the country. It was the subject of many, many board of public works debates, meetings, discussions, conversations, criticisms.

Governor Schafer and I talked about a lot in public. I see the heads nodding. We inherited one of the worst, transformed it into one of the best under Secretary Bob Flanagan.

With regard to housing, success. I got 15 seconds left. The bottom line is we rebalanced our approach to people with disabilities from the institutional setting to the community setting. And again, that's not a gratuitous measure, it is a constitutional right. That is my promise to you going forward, and thank you very much for allowing me to be here today.

[Applause]

>> Gov. O'Malley: Thank you very much. To everyone with Maryland Works, Maryland Disabilities Forum and all the groups that made today possible, I thank you for the invitation to be with you today. I acknowledge I'm joined by Kathy Raggio, Secretary of the Department of Disabilities, who does an outstanding job in toughest of times and --

[Applause]

I also want to thank John Colmers, Secretary of Health and Mental Hygiene for his compassion.

[Applause]

I too remember very fondly Joel Myerburg and Lorraine Sheehan. What great Marylanders.

October is Disability History and Awareness Month in the

state of Maryland.

[Applause]

And our administration established this month because we believe in raising awareness about the issues that we're here to discuss. These important issues impact all of us. They impact all of us. Why is that? Because we need each other. In our state there is no such thing as a spare Marylander or a spare American. We need each other.

In order to move forward, we need a government that works, a government that improves how it works, and a governor who is fighting on our side to make things better, especially in these tough times, when I think all of us would have to agree our country is coming through three of the toughest years we've ever faced in employment, in joblessness, and the economic challenges we've had to weather.

It is an honor to serve a great people at any time. It is a very humbling and distinct honor to serve you in these most difficult of times.

There are two qualities I love best about the people I have the honor to serve. One, we understand in our core and believe that we are actually all in this together. Number two, when we face adversity, we don't make excuses, we make progress.

We know the most important place in our state is a family's home, and there's nothing more critically important for protecting that home than a job.

So far this year we've had a better rate of job creation

than any year since 2000, but we've got a long way to go in order to make up what we've lost over these last few years. Don't we?

This campaign is therefore about one question: Do we slip back or do we move forward? Anthony Brown, our lieutenant governor, and I humbly ask for your support to move our state forward. Make no mistake about it, our state is in a battle. It is a battle for our children's future and the next generation. We will not win that battle by retreating back. Robert Kennedy once said that the future is not a gift, it's an achievement. For there will be states that win and states that lose, and the difference between those that win and those that lose will be the states that continue to forge the consensus necessary to move forward, protecting the dignity of every individual, making the investments in this innovation economy. And to move forward we have over these last four difficult years connected 11,000 Marylanders with disabilities with jobs, with an increased investment in DORS, Division of Rehabilitation Services, even in the toughest of time.

To help more Marylanders get to work and everywhere else they need to go, we've replaced curb-to-curb paratransit service with door-to-door service.

[applause]

30 seconds. To make state buildings and property, we invested \$6.4 million in upgrades, required closed captioning to anyone who requested it. We made the right, tough decision to close Rosewood. 15 seconds.

We recognized that, look, we also passed legislation to

fight the stigma by banning the R word. I have other things to talk about.

Nothing is perfect. We are looking forward. I look forward to talking with you in the course of the debate.

>> Mr. Ward: Thank you, gentlemen. Maryland Disabilities Forum has some principles that guide us, and we're now going to move into a series of six questions, each one of those questions impacts those in the state of Maryland, those people I talked about and their families and friends on a day-to-day basis.

They are general questions. I just received them this morning. I kind of expected that somebody was going to walk through the door with a -- handcuffed to a briefcase to hand them to me.

[Laughter]

I have them, and we're going to move into that.

The first question deals with community living. Marylanders with disabilities, regardless of the type of disability, have the same aspirations as anyone else: We want to live, shop, work, and attend school, worship, vote, recreate in an integrated community.

As is the case for most people, Marylanders with disabilities do not want to be forced into institutional settings, including nursing homes and other congregate residences that deny us the opportunity for full community participation.

My question is, if elected governor, what would you do to ensure that Marylanders with disabilities are offered the opportunity to live and participate in integrated community settings? Governor Ehrlich, you are first.

>> Gov. Ehrlich: We're all familiar -- open book test a little bit. Governor O'Malley and I have been -- I obviously know your principles. The bottom line to your principles is personal empowerment, and community setting.

As I said earlier, deinstitutionalization is not a gratuitous discretionary policy of government. It's a constitutional right. It's a constitutional right of everybody in this room. So this is something that government doesn't treat gingerly. It has evolved over many, many, many years.

So the programs and the initiatives, the tax preferences and the waivers and the changes to our Medicaid statute that we'll talk about during the next 45 minutes, are all pretty common to the issues that you brought to our attention, that you demand public policy meets in this state.

With regard to community supports, obviously, integrated community services is the bottom line to any administration, so that those services are accessible to people with disabilities in a convenient way.

The era of large institutions is over -- you can clap for that.

[Applause]

So focused on community-based service waivers as a matter of public policy is clearly where our administration was, where we believe our next administration must be.

Now, I also believe that we need to remember there are people in this room, people who work with people with disabilities, people who in the past have been not paid very well. So our DDA -- is that 30 seconds? Our

DDA wage initiative was instituted and passed during our administration for the first time in a long time, so people that contribute to quality of life also have a better quality of life. That's the right way to go. That was reflected in our policy and our administration, in our bills, and was law in the state of Maryland when I left office.

We thank you very much, the people who do this for a living. My time is up.

[Applause]

>> Mr. Ward: Two minutes.

>> Gov. O'Malley: With a government that works and fights for every Marylander, we embrace the strategy that empowering Marylanders with disabilities to transition from institutional settings and live as independently as possible in their neighborhoods and homes is the right way to go. A big part of the reason we're succeeding in that as a state is because of each and every one of you making sure that your voices were heard.

This is an important goal. During our administration we made the tough but the right decision with your support to close the Rosewood Center.

[Applause]

It had been plagued with health and safety issues, and we worked with former residents to integrate our citizens back into home settings.

There were gut-wrenching meetings, families scared to death. We met, John, not once, not twice, I think three different times with family

members, and were able to place people. Part of that credit goes to the people that do the hard work and care for people in the home settings.

Through all of these difficult years of cut after cut after cut to balance our budget, I have done our very best to be mindful of the importance of protecting our strides and efforts at creating greater parity and pay so more people can live independently in their home.

The money follows the person. Through this initiative, we helped nearly 680 Marylanders transition into the community. We want to do even better. We will seek to increase investment in community services as our economy recovers. Thanks very much.

[Applause]

>> Mr. Ward: The second question for the day deals with housing, in particular accessible and affordable housing. People with disabilities need accessible and affordable housing throughout Maryland. There is simply not enough accessible housing. Marylanders with disabilities want to live as independently as possible and want to live in the same diversity of housing types and neighborhoods as everyone else.

If elected governor, how would you address the critical shortage of needed accessible and affordable housing for Marylanders with disabilities? Governor Ehrlich?

>> Gov. Ehrlich: These issues are related, housing, transportation, employment, quality of life, deinstitutionalization. Obviously, housing is part of the predicate here, part of the foundation.

We support the Federal Housing Act, quite obviously. We all support strengthening housing codes. We all support increasing our housing stock through tax incentives, working with development in the community.

We had pretty terrific housing initiatives during our administration, more house for less, where the state would play a limited role with regard to particular employers and help with closing costs, getting people into their own homes. Very innovative programs, very popular programs at the time.

We believe in tax incentives that extend beyond ADA compliant. If we want a housing policy that works, we can talk about house codes and dollars and subsidiaries, but without a wraparound approach in community setting, without the appropriate waivers and funding that wraparound approach for people with disabilities, so that the services they demand in a community setting are available, we can have all the housing we want, but it's not going to meet one's needs.

So housing is clearly part of the predicate. Our regard with this is very strong. It was part of the charter that began on the part of disabilities, and obviously there has never been a part of the disabilities in the history of the state, the first of its kind in the country, in fact. Quite proud of it.
[Applause]

Thank you.

>> Gov. O'Malley: The number one barrier to community living for people with disabilities is the lack of affordable housing and inability to find it.

People at SSI or SDI levels of income are unable to rent

a one-bedroom apartment in most parts of our state.

Recently, our Department of Disabilities began a task force with the seven largest public housing authorities to ensure these authorities would apply for over 1600 vouchers. We had some success, 160 were applied for in Montgomery County, 100 in Carroll County, but we need to do better.

We have fought to connect 11,000 Marylanders with disabilities with jobs, and our fight continues because the job is the most important for protecting any home. Many of these issues in how we grow as a state and how we accommodate new population gives us opportunities to do a better job of providing affordable housing that is accessible to better transportation networks.

Transit oriented development, high-density housing that is near the Metro or MARC or other transit nodes are very important for us to capture moving forward.

We're going to continue to actively engage local jurisdictions that receive these dollars, and also to continue to provide home ownership program for people with disabilities through the Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development. Thank you.

[Applause]

>> Mr. Ward: On to the other huge issue for individuals in the state, which has to do with employment and the employment rate of Marylanders with disabilities.

Marylanders with disabilities are experiencing an unemployment rate that is many times higher than that of their nondisabled

peers. No doubt, progress has been made, but with so many people with disabilities excluded from the workplace much more needs to be done.

Gentlemen, what specific amount would you take as governor to increase employment opportunities for people with disabilities?

Governor Ehrlich?

>> Gov. Ehrlich: The problem is, as far back as these forms go, your statement would ring true, that people with disabilities have a much higher unemployment rate than any other population. So public policy over the years has served sometimes when it comes to the earnings limitation to discourage employment. It's wrong. That can be easily changed by Congress.

At the state level this is the reason we created the Department of Disabilities. My charter to Kris Cox was it's 80%, 70%, whatever it is, it's unacceptable, because the state of technology today, the community supports we have, the state of technology that allows people who otherwise would be unemployable to go to work, Michael being the greatest example, we need to take advantage of it, and that's the charter of your agency.

Set it up, empower people to go to work, because people want to go to work. To the extent they want to work, they can work, everybody is better off, and they will fulfill their constitutional mandate as well.

We supported and funded, in fact, Medicaid buy-in to the tune of \$11 million. Sending a lot of people back to work in the state. Not a cheap program, but it works. Those folks are back on the tax rolls, enjoying living in the state of Maryland.

As Governor O'Malley said, transportation was a policy of our administration, should be of every administration, because it allows you to live close to where you work. That makes common sense, regardless whether you're a Republican, Democrat, liberal or conservative.

Looking at my 15 seconds coming up here. In any event, this obviously is the bottom line to why we're here today, to the extent we have the ability to secure better employment, higher quality employment for people with disabilities. Let no stone be untouched with regard to that goal, because it fulfills our constitutional mandate to this community.

[Applause]

>> Gov. O'Malley: One of the main overarching goals that we have in this administration is to improve the skills level of our people for the jobs that are coming to Maryland, and integrated and included in everything that we do, from college to skills to compete in the entire initiative is our secretary of the Department of Disabilities.

I said, Kathy, you've got to be there at that table in all of those staff meetings as we drive this, because I know what a horribly high rate of unemployment there is as it affects people with disabilities.

We're coming off the first decade since the second world war, where we have seen no increase in the buying power of families. Wages, for the first time since the second world war, have been totally flat. That is why we support initiatives like living wage, that is why we support modest increases

from time to time, yes, in the minimum wage, because when people with disabilities do have jobs often they are at the lower end of the pay scale.

So we need to make sure that we protect the dignity of work by making sure that we keep the minimum wage keeping pace with inflation and the cost of things.

I mentioned 11,000 Marylanders with disabilities who have gotten jobs through the Division of Rehabilitation Services. We have also increased the employed individuals with disabilities program by 200%.

I have appointed Kathy Raggio to serve, thank you, permanently as my representative on the Governor's Workforce Investment Board to make these connections.

We've been working hard to connect skills training to every individual that needs, also encouraging employers through things like the Think Beyond the Label Campaign. You may have seen those billboards and placards. Thank you.

[Applause]

>> Mr. Ward: I notice my timekeeper is having too much fun.

[Laughter]

She said it's probably the only opportunity she'll have in her lifetime to tell a governor to shut up.

[Laughter]

I know that both of you touched on transportation a little bit, and our next subject matter deals with transportation and the adequate viewpoint and quality of the

transportation system services.

Maryland's current transportation system is woefully inadequate, both in overall capacity and timeline, when it comes to providing services for people with disabilities.

Now, if you were elected governor, how would you address both the shortage and dependability of transportation services for Marylanders with disabilities? If I might add, if you can, speak a little bit about some of the issues that so many individuals face today, and that deals with transportation from region to region.

If you lived in Montgomery County today, you would not be able to get here by public transportation. That's something we've been asking for, dealing with for years, it's something we're still asking that Maryland deal with.

With that, Governor?

>> Gov. Ehrlich: Region to region and securing adequate transportation to senior centers are the two predominant complaints I received last week as I walked around, talked to folks at the senior expo, both folks with disabilities, advocates there, and others. So clearly, you're right, we hear it, particularly given the excellence that we have with certain senior centers around the state of Maryland today. The county has done a pretty good job. You're not going to enjoy the benefits if you can't get there. We all understand that.

Transportation is really important in the context of jobs and securing those senior centers. Transportation is really important when a job

exists. Governor O'Malley mentioned a few times, I've mentioned a few times as well, this election is about jobs as well. And this is not a debate, but it is a clearly interesting opportunity to see and hear and compare and contrast records on employment and job creation, because to the extent the economy is better or getting better, to the extent it can create jobs in Maryland, to the extent there will be more opportunities for people with disabilities to secure that employment, that technology today that allows us to access.

We brought during our administration -- I talked about paratransit, which was a mess, in shambles, we were able to bring it back. Not just ADA compliant, but to be viewed as one of the best in the country.

We also brought a bunch of new MTA vehicles that were ADA compliant, and in fact were met with overwhelming support from your community. So pretty good record in that regard.

Again, transportation is an issue, particularly in the context of jobs and job creation and the ability of a state to have a secure jobs environment.

[Applause]

>> Gov. O'Malley: In our administration, in the toughest of times, we have fought to improve and upgrade paratransit mobility and Metro access. We've added 48 new wheelchair vans, 55 sedans in the mobility paratransit fleet. In the toughest of times, when everything else is cut.

In the Baltimore area -- it's a growing round of applause.

[Laughter]

In the Baltimore area we have replaced curb-to-curb paratransit with door-to-door. I've asked the services coordinating committee we created to work on securing better transit operations for Marylanders in less populated areas of the state.

I've already mentioned transit-oriented development. I won't go over that a second time in the interest of time. But I do want to underscore this very important goal. When our administration was elected four years ago we promised we would advance a much more balanced vision for transportation, that included not only roads, but also included better mass transit. That is why we have chosen to move forward and make sure that we prioritize within our existing budget the dollars for the building of the red line in Baltimore and the purple line in Montgomery County. Critically important routes.

[Applause]

>> Mr. Ward: Adequate healthcare and affordable healthcare, adequate access to affordable healthcare is a problem faced by all Marylanders. For people with disabilities, not having adequate access to healthcare becomes a barrier to independent living, and in some cases escalates to becoming a matter of life and death. Even when some coverage is available, the lack of coverage for many critical services, such as mental health services, provision of durable medical equipment, creates unnecessary suffering for the individual and expense to the taxpayers.

How would you address this critical need for adequate and affordable healthcare for people with disabilities if elected governor?

>> Gov. Ehrlich: I was a big champion in Congress of health centers, federally subsidized health centers. We opened one in Baltimore, and advocated throughout my tenure in Congress. We can do a better job of matching up people with disabilities with the services provided. No doubt about it.

Secondly, we can use telecommuting much more efficiently today than in the past. I'm interested because as a member of Congress there were not a lot of Republicans who sponsored mental health parity, but I did, because I thought it was the right thing to do. In fact, I appeared at forums across the state of Maryland --

[Applause]

-- in that regard, and obviously mental health parity with regard to not just adults but children is the next generation issue, next horizon issue in the state and throughout the mental health community in this country. Everybody knows it.

Concerning prescription drugs, the new Part D benefit was controversial, people said we couldn't afford it, it would cost too much. The cost is coming down, more choices available. Even here there are criticisms.

It was passed in a bipartisan way in the Congress of the United States. It has increased accessibility for lots of people with disabilities and without disabilities across this country, and the fact that you don't hear a lot about it today speaks volumes about how successful it's been. So let's not forget a pretty good initiative there from the past.

I am aware our autism waiver, with which we worked on is limited. I'm also aware the waiver with regard to intellectual disabilities is

limited as well. That's simply dollars and cents priorities. Do you have the dollars? Can you secure permission from feds? These issues will confront our administration going forward, and we'll work with you to secure those dollars.

[Applause]

>> Gov. O'Malley: We are one of only six states that receives, in the toughest of times, a highest grade for mental health supports from the National Alliance on Mental Illness. That grade is a B.

[Applause]

While there is certainly room for improvement, that's higher than any of the states around us.

We have increased enrollment in the People with Disabilities Program, those returning to work or expanding working hours. We have also -- we're one of the first states to address the big gap that was in that Medicare Part D donut hole, where after a certain amount of time you fell into that hole and you could not get out. So we created a needs-based benefit to close that donut hole.

Probably the most important thing we've done is extended and improving healthcare coverage, extended healthcare coverage to 213,000 people that did not have it before.

[Applause]

213,000 people. We used to be in the basement on Medicaid. Now we've moved out of that 44th place ranking. We have also been able to increase, increase in these tough times the dollars we invest in early intervention, and the

Infants and Toddlers Program. We've invested in the toughest of times, while everything else was being cut, \$36 million in infants and toddlers over four years. 71% increase. Critically important.

[Applause]

Did I have any time left? I left time there?

[Laughter]

I support -- I support President Obama's courageous drive to provide healthcare for all. I think it's a good thing.

[Applause]

>> Mr. Ward: I know it's difficult not to get excited about some of the comments up here, but I've asked that you hold your applause till the end. We need to recognize both gentlemen for their good work.

I have one final formal question of our governors today, it has to do with education, in particular integrated and well supported educational services. From a policy perspective, access to integrated education has become the accepted standard for children and young adults with disabilities. Yet, too often it is not provided or it is carried out in a fashion that puts students with disabilities in integrated classrooms without the needed complement of supports to achieve successful learning.

What would you do as governor to ensure both an integrated educational experience and access to needed supports for students with disabilities? Governor Ehrlich?

>> Gov. Ehrlich: Those supports are particularly needed in Title I schools in our

poorer subdivisions. There are programs, mentorship programs along the lines of Experience Corps, that places mentors in those classrooms to what you're talking about, Dave, frankly, is helping the ratio, so kids with special needs, kids who have more demands receive more face time from their teacher. These programs can be implemented and should be implemented.

We fully funded the Thornton during our tenure as governor, despite the legislature wouldn't give me my funding source. We did because it was a constitutional mandate. The fact that you're poor, from a poor subdivision, should not be a predictor of the quality of public education you receive in the state or country.

We have programs in our community colleges that were very popular. We consolidate early education programs, which was very controversial at the time, all under MDE, Maryland Department of Education. They said it couldn't be done. It took a lot of heavy lifting to do it. As a result, the advocates in that area are quite pleased.

We also consolidated all of our educational programs on juvenile justice system. We have a lot of kids in our juvenile justice system in need of cognitive redevelopment, in need of special services. We were able to bring all of those programs under MDE and place those folks within our juvenile justice institutions. That really hadn't been done in the past either.

Integrated setting obviously, the ability to fund positions for transitioning youth, the ability to use the bully pulpit as governor to tell the employment sector in Maryland, the people that create jobs, the people who want

to hire and can hire those with disabilities, it's the right thing to do. It's about economic empowerment. It's about increasing your bottom line. Again, it's about securing those with disabilities their constitutional rights and the ability to prosper in this state and in this country.

[Applause]

>> Gov. O'Malley: In the midst of this recession and in these tough times, we have protected the investments we make as a people in education and making college more affordable.

For two years in a row our schools have been named the number one public schools in America by "Education Week" magazine, and we're the only state to go four years in a row without a penny's increase to college tuition.

The reason we do these as a people, we understand the most important asset we have in making this transition to a new economy are the talents, the skills, the creative capacity and innovative capacity of all of our people. It's why "Forbes" magazine ranks Maryland's workforce as one of the three highest skilled in America.

71% increase to infants and toddlers, we did that because it makes sense in the earliest years of a child's development, to be able to provide the services that they need, and so we can do a better job helping out families with special needs during the first three years of their child's life as they're developing lifelong skills.

It's also why we've launched a new website for transition

age youth and their families on October 1. This website was developed by the Governor's Interagency Transition Council for Youth and Disabilities.

I might also add, thanks to the changes that we made three years ago, where children could stay on their parents' healthcare until age 25, President Obama modeled an aspect of his reforms on that, and now those same children will be able to stay on their parents' healthcare until age 26.

Which is a positive step in the right direction.

All of these issues as they come up, let me ask you to think about this, how many of you believe the solutions to these challenges will be found in cutting government? In making government smaller?

How many of you think we're actually going to reach out to more people by doing less or relying simply on volunteers?

[Applause]

>> Mr. Ward: We're doing very well on time. And I appreciate the candidates being -- paying attention to that.

>> Gov. Ehrlich: She has the cards.

[Laughter]

>> Mr. Ward: That's right. At this time we have an opportunity to move to a few questions from the audience.

We'll try to get to as many questions as possible, but please understand that we won't be able to get to them all.

I want to be able to tell you this, the Maryland Disabilities Forum will make sure each and every question that was submitted today gets to

our candidates.

MDF has a website. When we get answers, we'll put those answers on the website so that you can visit and find out what the answers to those questions were.

If you don't have Internet access, give the MDF office a call, and we'll mail you, snail mail, a copy.

At this time I would like to call on Luanne King. Raise your hand. Our microphone. Dr. Wood?

>> Why is Maryland one of the richest states in the union, yet is at the bottom five states for funding for services for individuals with disabilities?

>> Mr. Ward: Gentlemen?

>> Gov. Ehrlich: I don't know what barometer you're using, what score, from which source.

>> Well, I get many different ones and you get ranked first, second, third, as far as wealth in this state.

>> Gov. Ehrlich: We're a pretty wealthy state, no doubt about that. Though we're losing wealth lately.

>> In our funding, we specifically deal with Developmental Disabilities Administration, and our funding compared to the other 49 states we're usually ranked in the bottom five as far as what we're getting for our services, residential day, supported employment.

>> Gov. Ehrlich: We were pretty aggressive with regard to securing dollars. You're talking about, for the most part, the ability to convince the feds to liberalize

your autonomy, which means giving you waivers with regard to certain programs.

My experience as governor was pretty good success in that regard. I'm at a little bit of a disadvantage, maybe we both are, what you're referring to Maryland today presently being at the bottom.

I know there is a waiting list, it has been out there a long time. Again, the ability to secure an economic recovery, ability to make sure Annapolis is not in a deficit situation, the ability to have a jobs agenda to put people back to work will go a long way to ending that waiting list, regardless of the service involved.

I'll talk about management boards in a different context that will come up, but as far as our ability to secure dollars, we were pretty aggressive. I suspect Governor O'Malley is trying to be aggressive as well with the present administration. That really counts in this field, as you know.

>> Gov. O'Malley: There is so much work that all of us need to do. We should be proud of our state. We have an economy that is poised to make these next two decades very positive. But when you look at some of the differences in our state, whether it's on the wealth or our level of -- number of people who have college degrees or postgraduate degrees, then you look at other indicators, we're clearly falling down.

Until we extended healthcare coverage to 213,000 additional Marylanders by raising it up to 116%, we were in the basement on Medicaid.

Here we were on the doorstep of our nation's capital, yet

we were ranked about 44th out of the states.

That 213,000 additional people still hasn't accomplished what President Obama will enable us to accomplish, which is healthcare for all, but it was progress. The 71% increase in funding to infants and toddlers, that doesn't cover every family that needs that help, but it did enable us to increase by 50% the number of children that we serve.

I had no idea, when I was sworn in four years ago, that our country would be going through this sort of downturn. One of the last times that I saw Lorraine Sheehan and had a conversation with her, it was in the ground floor of the State House. I said, Lorraine, I wanted to do so much more on reducing a waiting list. We have reduced some, DORS notably, and the infants and toddlers that I mentioned.

I said, I wanted to do so much more. She said, Martin, these are tough times, and you've done more than any other governor around these parts to protect the most vulnerable among us, and you have to find some satisfaction in that. Keep going. This recession is not going to last forever.

So we do have a lot of work still left to do, but together we can do it, we can make progress every day. Each person counts.

>> Mr. Ward: Colleen Casswell. I'm sorry if I don't pronounce your last name right.

>> Hello. I am a parent of a child with autism. Would you please explain whether or not you support legislation mandating insurance coverage for autism treatment and therapy in the state of Maryland. Thank you.

>> Gov. Ehrlich: We have to be careful of mandates. We're a heavily mandated state right now, and it drives insurance coverage very expensive. I prefer to go the route to securing obviously an autism waiver that makes sense, that expands population, that is able to benefit from those dollars.

We talk about waivers a lot. As a governor, it's the most effective tool you have. It allows you to go to the federal government to secure dollars. We still pay half, but it gives you more autonomy and saves dollars in the long-term. I'm well aware of limitations with regard to our present autism waiver, however.

>> Gov. O'Malley: We have convened a whole commission on healthcare implementation that is chaired by John Colmers and co-chaired by Lieutenant Governor Anthony Brown. This is one of the issues I've asked them to look at, because a bill came up. Karen Montgomery, who was in the House of Delegates, now elected to the state Senate, if I know Karen, she's not going to let this issue rest.

We have some of the best professional people of any state in the country when it comes to attacking autism. We've seen greater numbers of kids diagnosed with autism. And so we need to be a leader in what we do as a state in making sure we can get that earliest intervention.

That's why the infants and toddlers dollars were so important and why it's going to be so important not to sue President Obama, not to try to keep healthcare from coming here for everyone, but to work with the Obama Administration, to work with Kathleen Sebelius and figure out that

Maryland can lead the way and show other states just how much progress we can make on autism and other challenges that we face as a human family.

>> Mr. Ward: Anthony Tabb? Anthony? There he is.

>> How do you feel about stem cell research in regards to chronic illnesses?

>> Gov. Ehrlich: I support it. I supported stem cell research. That was my voting record in the Congress of United States. Adult stem cell research is somewhat less controversial, has been over the years. That is my position.

With regard to this community, this has been and continues to be a hot topic issue. I respect the diversity of us here. It's a shame that the abortion debate that divides us in this country is brought to this issue, but my voting record is what it is.

I do believe that particularly with regard to scientific research in this area, that folks in this room, certain disabilities, certain diseases, will be attacked in the short-term, and defeated.

We are, Kendel and I, I'm sure the governor and his wife, are asked to do charitable work, show up at different events around the country. We have been educated -- cystic fibrosis, for example, we can educate and identify the particular gene here.

This is cutting edge research, happening in Maryland, at Hopkins, at University of Maryland throughout our system. It seems to me the issue of discarded embryos has been quite divisive, but with regard to those embryos that have been discarded, President Bush had his compromise, my view is if they're discarded they can be used for scientific research, we should

use them.

>> Gov. O'Malley: We now have, even in these toughest of times, one of the most active stem cell research funds of any state in the country. There are some that might be bigger, but none is more active than Maryland's.

Even with all of the cuts and all of the spending reductions, we've had to cut \$5.6 billion in cuts and spending reductions, we have nonetheless been able to defend those dollars that we put into stem cell research.

Now, with the Obama Administration coming into office, lifting the ban, taking the handcuffs off science but keeping the ethical considerations there and on the table and addressed, I think this is an opportunity for Maryland to lead the way.

We sit in a corridor of science, discovery and healing, the likes of which exists no place else in this world. So what we can do to advance stem cell research is something that is critically important, not only for our future as a state, it's important for our country and humanity. We need to keep moving forward.

There were many that said now that President Obama is elected you don't need to do it anymore, we can save by cutting stem cell. We said, Heck no. We're going to continue to push forward, put dollars into stem cell research to advance cures and to advance healings.

It distinguishes us I think in a positive way from other states. We are healing people. We are committed to science and to discovery,

and our president now is committed to that as well. So that is my position.

>> Mr. Ward: Next, Mira Jacobs. Way down in the south 40.

[Laughter]

>> Will the developmental disabilities waiting list receive increased funding this year under your administration?

>> I think the president is the greatest man in the world about mental health, sir.

>> Mr. Ward: We need clarification on the question. I believe it deals with the waiting list? Nollie, can you paraphrase?

>> The question is: Will the developmental disabilities waiting list receive increased funding this year under your administration?

>> Gov. Ehrlich: I talked about earlier, it's easy for us to sit up here and say yes. It's always a question of scarce resources. Every administration in the state wants to take that waiting list down. It will be a priority for us. It was a priority in the future.

Also, one brief comment about stem cells. We started that commission in a very balanced way with regard to pro-life and pro-choice representation on that commission. That was our commission. I'm quite proud of it. So that an abortion-laden agenda would not dominate the science, which is always very important when coming to very emotional issues and taxpayer dollars.

>> Gov. O'Malley: Some of the toughest things we've had to do over these last four years, it seems every three months because of the wreck that was made of our economy, the wreck that was made of Wall Street, we have had to go back

seven different times between budgets and make cuts. It's some of the most painful work that we've had to do over these last few years.

John Colmers and Secretary Raggio can tell you that I don't impose blanket across-the-board everybody just cut 5%. Every time one of these decisions come up, and when we go over what we need to do to come up with \$300 million to take again out of your operating budget, we ask one question and one question only: How is this going to affect real people and real families, and how is this especially going to affect those among us who are most dependent on that little bit of help that we're able to provide as a community through that common tool of ours called our government?

There are some things in this world that we can only do together, public safety, public education, and yes public health, especially the things we aspire to do as a people.

Transitioning youth, we have maintained funding, and as more youth come in we continue to maintain that funding.

I have gone out -- we have gone out of our way not to go backwards on the waiting list. We have added dollars for DORS so we can knock out that particular waiting list, but we still have a long way to go.

One thing that would absolutely exacerbate our ability to reduce that waiting list would be if we added to our already challenging budget for next year the removal of that penny on the sales tax, which would put almost another \$800 million onto that deep hole. We want to do better. We're going to need our economy to recover to do so.

>> Mr. Ward: Time for a couple more questions. Herb Cromwell. Do we have a mic?

>> Hi, thank you. One of the critical issues facing us, even with the opportunity of healthcare reform, is workforce. The healthcare reform will bring much greater access to people with insurance, much greater access to people eligible for Medicaid.

We hear a lot about the challenges that will bring to being able to access primary care, but we also have a workforce crisis in community mental health and in other arenas serving people with disabilities.

What will you do as governor to help ameliorate the workforce crisis facing community mental health and other disability programs?

>> Gov. Ehrlich: When you talk about workforce crisis, are you talking about training professionals?

>> Shortages, turnover rates, vacancy rates that limit because of poor salaries --

>> Gov. Ehrlich: Reimbursement rates that are low, lack of programming at community colleges?

>> All of the above.

>> Gov. Ehrlich: I just gave you the answer.

[Laughter]

That's part of it. Governor O'Malley talks about we have a national recession, we have, but budgets reflects priorities. Your ability to create a new department to work with that particular charter speaks volumes about what you believe in. You put your money where your mouth is.

I guess I was criticized to some extent because we expanded government in that regard, but we were happy to create this agency. Its charter should be empowering people with disabilities to secure jobs.

Community colleges had a hard time. Their budgets have been hit hard. The funds community colleges has taken a drastic hit. I believe community colleges are in the vanguard of workforce development in this state and country. We talk about bang for the buck and systems schools and private schools and what's been hit, what's held sacrosanct.

Community colleges have been hit hard, particularly parents and kids from limited incomes, the ability to secure programs such as 2 and 2, 2 years of community college, 2 years in a 4-year school, really makes sense to me. It is part of the wave of the future. More Maryland students are taking advantage of these opportunities.

>> Gov. O'Malley: There are very few things in our state budget that have not been hit by this national recession, and they would be hit even harder if we take the already challenging gap for next year and double it for the sake of a campaign promise. And the people that would feel that impact the most will be the most vulnerable people in our society.

We have actually increased funding to community colleges, even in these tough times. I think approximately a 30% increase.

We have greatly increased what we have invested, because we're one of only eight states that still has a AAA bond rating, because we are fiscally responsible, we do the tough things necessary to move forward.

We've greatly increased capital investment for new modern classrooms at community colleges. I would agree with the former governor on the point that the community colleges are the ideal place for workforce. The call of the question had to do with reimbursement rates for community care and independent living. We ran into this. Many of you advocated and said it's hard, you are doing the right thing, though, but don't forget if more and more people are living independently, we have to work to increase that parity for pay, because as long as someone can make more money working in a nursing home than by taking care of people living independently, hey, spouses are the same the world over, right?

Spouses are the same the world over. So we made strides on that. When we had to do the initial rounds of cuts, I really protected the increases we made on those provided community care, home-based care. We've done other things as well to tie their reimbursements to COLAs given to other state employees, but we have still a lot of work to do on that score.

>> Mr. Ward: One last question from William Russell. Hang on, William. We'll get you a mic.

>> OK. Thank you.

Hi, my name is Will Russell. I applied for Medicaid, but was ruled ineligible because I was an Americorps volunteer. Would either candidate consider changing the rule for eligibility so people with disabilities can get health insurance coverage?

>> Gov. Ehrlich: That's the common denominator to what we discussed today, it

was a common denominator to what led me to be so active to issues related to people with disabilities. It was a depression era law that forbid folks under SSI getting benefits from secure employment. Same with you. No different. Simply a different federal program.

Of course, that's what we do, that's what we're in the business of doing. To the extent you can't make laws more modern, to the extent you can convince the feds that we have to stop penalizing people who can and want to work, people with disabilities, people with limited tools, for example, that's the road to success in life. Because typically these jobs are entry level, and people will stay for a period of time, out and make more money, be more successful, then start their own business.

That led me to be such an activist with regard to people with disabilities and these agendas we've been discussing today, the unfortunate ability of the state to penalize those who can and should work from their ability to do that work.

>> Gov. O'Malley: We were speaking earlier in the hall. I hope that we have greater success in appealing your matter. I know Wendy took your name and address.

The Employing Individuals with Disabilities Program was created under President Clinton, and by September 30, 2010, 551 individuals with disabilities were able to work and keep access to crucial health benefits.

There's also been a 200% increase in employed individuals with disabilities program since enrollment in December of 2007.

So let us take a shot at seeing what we might be able to do in your particular case. I'm not as familiar with why Americorps would keep you from applying for that program or not. But we will follow up with you, and again, it's an important program, and it's one we're expanding. And we need to do more of these things. They work, they help people get to work, and helps all of us, therefore.

>> Mr. Ward: We're now going to move into the closing remarks from our candidates. At this time I call on Governor Ehrlich.

>> Gov. Ehrlich: As you see, there is some disagreement, but a lot of agreement on some of these issues. It's a good place to come here, to talk to issues important to this community.

Earlier I talked about what led me to be active, what led me to learn about people with disabilities, about Special Olympics, about empowerment, about IDEA, about earnings limitations that go back to the depression, about people given the state of technology, who can and should work, are unable because the government is standing in the way of their ability to do work.

All of those lessons that activism, that experience, people I met particularly through National Federation of the Blind led me to begin our agency, our state agent system under Kris Cox, who did a terrific job, and Diane, here as well, our deputy, did a terrific job.

The six principles we discussed that form the predicate of your agenda, the predicate of our department. That's what we did every day.

That's how we hired people. We measured, by the way, we took benchmarks that you wanted us to follow and looked at each agency of state government and measured those benchmarks accordingly.

That's really what you have been about over the years. There's a philosophical underpinning here, and it's about freedom. This country is about freedom.

Civil rights have come a long way. Sometimes the law catches up, sometimes the law is the limitation. But the bottom line to all of this is the ability to take a person regardless of what they look like, regardless of disability, regardless of anything -- anything -- and have them flourish in Maryland and the United States of America.

That's what this agency is all about. That's what your six principles are about. Those principles form the predicate for this agency. They form the predicate for this administration. They form the predicate for my activism over many years in public office.

There are tough times ahead. Governor O'Malley talked about how difficult the last couple years have been. Guess what -- the national unemployment rate is high, it's a jobless recovery, we spent a lot of money, we're in big-time multigenerational debt.

The ability of a chief executive in this state to understand your issues, not just empathize, not just empathize, but understand what you go through, understand how the law impacts you, understand the role of community colleges, the ability to secure waivers from the appropriate federal agency, the

ability to generate wraparound services and empower local management boards, all of this stuff influences every experience you have in this state, particularly young people.

That's why I want to be your governor. This is an exciting time. This is an exciting time for people with disabilities. The state of technology will never go back. It will always go forward. We will empower more people in this country going forward. There will be more job opportunities. Sometimes the government needs to get out of the way.

We must be flexible, we must be innovative and we must remember the constitutional frame for this discussion, which is people with disabilities should enjoy the same freedom every other American enjoys and every other Marylander as well.

Thank you very much, and God speed.

[Applause]

>> Gov. O'Malley: The part of the Constitution I like best is the part that says, We the people, in order to form a more perfect union. The journey of our republic depends on each and every one of you. For all of the diversity in our state and this America and in our country, I'm always struck by the most important things that unite us as a people: Our belief in the dignity of every individual. Our belief in our own responsibilities to advance the common good. And our understanding that we're all in this together, that every person matters, and that God loves even our partial victories.

I think Joel Myerburg and Lorraine Sheehan would be

very, very proud of the crowd of Marylanders that is here today, insisting, especially in tough times, that we still have the ability to make ours a more perfect union. By not looking past any individual, by realizing that there's a dignity, there's a humanity and there is a divinity in every single person.

I believe that, and you believe that as well. Our country is going now through a time of tremendous anger, self-doubt, frustration. Our savings have been wrecked. Every family and business has been harmed. Regulators were gagged or told to look the other way while an unscrupulous few on Wall Street drove our economy into the ground.

We have fought for many, many years far away from home on wars that were unfinanced and unfunded, and yes, we do face pretty serious fiscal challenges as a country.

For all our anger, for all our frustration, those things are not going to move us forward. What moves us forward is making the right choices. Yes, oftentimes the tough choices, but the choices that are always based on the dignity of every individual.

We will not come out of this deep recession sooner by digging the hole deeper. There are some things in this world that are more important than a penny on the sales tax.

[Applause]

Those children that are now served in the Infants and Toddlers Program, those kids are more important than a penny on the sales tax.

>> I'll pay it!

>> Gov. O'Malley: The kids that are able to transition, transitioning youth that have supports they need, more important than that penny on the sales tax. The kids that need to be treated early and diagnosed early so that they can live a full life, even with what we don't know about autism, those kids are more important than a penny on the sales tax.

There are things about our state that are admirable and things that we need to embrace and live out in our own actions and our choices. In the times of greatest self-doubt, that is when our state shows the rest of the country that our best days are still in front of us, that we can be a more perfect union.

We have had the best job of -- best year of net new job creation since 2000. We're not done, but we're moving forward and not back.

The US Chamber of Commerce named our state one of the top two for innovation and entrepreneurship. You look at the cuts other states had to make to their problems affecting people with disabilities, and you see different choices being made here in our state.

I am proud to serve a generous and good people, especially in difficult times, and together I ask you to join me and let us all keep moving forward. Thanks very much.

[Applause]

>> Mr. Ward: Now it is time for you all to stand and show your appreciation for our candidates.

[Applause]

Before we close out, I do want to thank both the candidates. It's been a long day for both of them. And I know that they're both very tired and they want to get out of here. I can't thank them enough for making my job easy this afternoon.

I also want to remind each of you that you will have an opportunity, I think, to view some of the debate or some of the forum today on Maryland Public Television. Keep your eye out for when that time slot will be. Usually around 2:00, 3:00 in the morning.

[Laughter]

Hopefully not. I also want to mention to you that thank you, because I understand that we have over 600 individuals who have registered.

[Applause]

At the table. And I know there are other people here who might not have registered.

Thanks again, and please make sure that you are paying personal attention to the issues in the next 30 days or next three weeks. Be active in your advocacy. And most importantly, vote. That creates a real impact on improving the lives of Marylanders with disabilities.

Thank you!

[Applause]