

House Appropriations Committee

HB 475 – Community Colleges – Students with Disabilities

Testimony by

Joseph Wozny, student, Anne Arundel Community College

Position: Support

My name is Joseph Wozny. I am a student at Anne Arundel Community College, and I support House Bill 475. I believe students with disabilities should be afforded the same opportunities for success as those without. As a student with hearing loss and other disabilities, I see myself as an example of what disabled people can accomplish, given the right tools, and I know firsthand how this can completely change a person's life. I struggled through high school and despite having a high IQ, it was difficult to achieve a C in many classes. At times, I wanted to drop out.

After my graduation from high school, I applied to Anne Arundel Community College, somewhat reluctantly, assuming my experience would be the same as it was in high school. However, I could not have been more wrong. The college turned out to be the place where I would finally be given the resources I needed to reach my full potential. Thanks to the Disability Support Services and my DSS Advisor, Mira, I was given access to real-time transcription services, in addition to other accommodations. Transcriptions changed my life. For the first time, I could understand everything the professors, and the other students, were saying. I no longer felt lost in classes and was able to participate fully in them. I no longer feared being called on and not knowing the answer. My grades improved to the point that I was able to earn scholarships and I am maintaining an A average. In addition, I was inducted into the honor society Phi Theta Kappa. I attribute my current success to having the right tools and support

from Disability Services. However, tools and accommodations are not free, and support services are not provided by volunteers. Without special funding, that money has to come from other departments. I hope you agree that setting aside special funding for students with disabilities is a high priority and can be life changing. I am living proof of the life changing impact the right Disability Services can have on a student.