

Subject: Favorable HB903 Education – Access to Attorneys, Advocates, and Consultants for Special Education Program and Fund

Date: February 21, 2024

From: National Federation of the Blind of Maryland

15 Charles Plaza, #3002, Baltimore, MD 21201

president@nfbmd.org

To: House Ways and Means Committee

Please support HB903, a bill giving access to attorneys, advocates, and consultants for students with disabilities. This bill will provide valuable information to the parents and will guarantee the civil rights of the parents and students to acquire a free and appropriate education. The bill will also create a fund for these attorneys, advocates, and consultants to be administered by the Maryland Volunteer Lawyers Service. It is appropriate that access to this fund is limited to students and parents with limited financial means.

The IEP team is very intimidating to the parents if advocates or consultants are not present. Disabled parents of students with disabilities are entitled to this information as well as non-disabled parents. The information should be provided to blind and print-disabled parents in an accessible format as required by law. If this is not done, the bill will fail to be an equity bill.

Please vote in favor of HB903 and strengthen the civil rights of families with students who have disabilities.