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BILL: SB 1091
TITLE: Education - Blind and Visually Impaired Students - Textbook Equity
DATE: March 27, 2024
POSITION: Favorable
COMMITTEE: House Ways and Means Committee
CONTACT: Mary Pat Fannon, Executive Director, PSSAM

The Public School Superintendents' Association of Maryland (PSSAM), on behalf of all twenty-four public school superintendents, **supports** Senate Bill 1091.

This bill requires, by January 1, 2025, publishers that sell pupil edition textbooks in the State to provide an electronic file of the textbook in a specified standard to the National Instructional Materials Access Center. It further requires local boards of education to, by March 15 of each year, determine the instructional materials that will be used in the upcoming school year by students with individualized education programs (IEPs) and 504 plans under the federal Rehabilitation Act of 1973. A local board must coordinate with the Instructional Resources Center (IRC) to provide the instructional materials in a specialized format to students who are blind or visually impaired, no later than the first day of classes of the upcoming school year. If a local board is unable to fulfill these requirements, the local board and the family of the student must develop and agree on a plan to remedy the delivery of the instructional materials no later than 45 days before the first day of classes of the upcoming school year. The Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) must provide specified support to the IRC and cover the cost to produce certain instructional materials under certain circumstances.

PSSAM supports the purpose and intent of Senate Bill 1091 to ensure accessibility for vision-impaired students to textbooks and other instructional materials. PSSAM believes that each student should have high quality and accessible instructional materials, and all Individualized Education Plans (IEP) and 504 plans that account for specialized materials should be met with expediency and accuracy.

PSSAM thanks the sponsor, advocates, and committee for working together on the house version of this legislation and amending the bill in its current form.

PSSAM supports a special education system that respects the dedication and professional expertise of special educators and school administrators to develop, in collaboration with parents, individual education programs (IEPs) to identify and determine the most appropriate services and learning materials for students. With the bill in its current form, PSSAM welcomes the additional services Senate Bill 1091 would provide to our special education students and families.

For these reasons, PSSAM **supports** Senate Bill 1091 and requests a **favorable** report.