

Education Advocacy Coalition

for Students with Disabilities

HOUSE WAYS AND MEANS COMMITTEE

HOUSE BILL 336: Maryland Achieving a Better Life Experience (ABLE) Program—Materials for Individualized Education Program Meetings

DATE: JANUARY 31, 2024

POSITION: SUPPORT

The Education Advocacy Coalition for Students with Disabilities (EAC), a coalition of more than 40 organizations and individuals concerned with education policy for students with disabilities in Maryland, is pleased to support House Bill 336, which would require that at least once per year, parents of children with disabilities receive written informational materials about the Maryland Achieving a Better Life Experience (ABLE) Program. The ABLE program allows families to create tax-free savings account for their member with a disability to be used for disability-related expenses. Significantly, House Bill 336 also requires that these informational materials be translated into the parent's native language if the parent's native language is not English. EAC members feel confident that the State is already required to ensure that written materials are available upon request in an alternative format for those who are unable to read print; it may be helpful for House Bill 336 to include this provision for the sake of clarity.

Although information about the ABLE Program will be helpful to parents of students with disabilities of all ages, as it will help families financially plan for their children, understanding and setting up ABLE accounts can be an important step in transition planning for youth with disabilities as they get older and the Individualized Education Program (IEP) team identifies the services and supports needed to help a student exit the school system as independently as possible.

For these reasons, the EAC supports House Bill 336. For additional information, please contact Leslie Seid Margolis, Co-Chairperson, at lesliem@disabilityrightsmd.org or 443-692-2505.

Respectfully submitted,

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