

Education Advocacy Coalition

for Students with Disabilities

HOUSE WAYS AND MEANS COMMITTEE

SENATE BILL 1091: Education—Blind and Visually Impaired Students—Textbook Equity

DATE: MARCH 27, 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 Senate Bill 1091, which would ensure that students who are blind or visually impaired would have timely access to the textbooks and supplementary instructional materials used by their sighted peers in class. The goal of Senate Bill 1091 is to ensure equity for students who are blind or visually impaired. Currently, students may not get their textbooks on time or ever because local school boards do not make decisions about which textbooks to use until it is too late to get the books transcribed into accessible media or because local school boards cannot or will not pay to have the textbook transcribed into accessible media.

The legislation would require that publishers send an electronic file of every pupil edition textbook sold in Maryland to the National Instructional Materials Access Center (NIMAC) in NIMAS (National Instructional Materials Access Standard) form. NIMAC will store the files for use in production of the books. Additionally, the bill requires local boards of education to decide by January 15th of each year which textbooks they will use the following school year, and requires the Maryland State Department of Education to purchase any book that will be used if the Maryland Instructional Resource Center (MIRC) does not have the book or cannot locate it.

With these steps, Maryland can ensure that its students who are blind and visually impaired have the opportunity to participate in class with the same instructional materials and textbooks as their peers. For this reason, the EAC strongly supports Senate Bill 1091.

Please contact Leslie Seid Margolis at lesliem@disabilityrightsmd.org or 443-692-2505 with any questions.

Respectfully submitted,

Selene Almazan, Selene Almazan

Rene Averitt-Sanzone, The Parents' Place of Maryland

Linda Barton, MSED, Education Consultant

Elizabeth Benevides, Autism Society of Maryland, Co-Chairperson

Ellen A. Callegary, J.D.

Rich Ceruolo, Parent

Michelle Davis, M.Ed., ABCs for Life Success

Lisa Frank, Andrea Bennett, Jen Ritchotte, and Amy Tonti, Special Kids Company

Kimberly Glassman and Brian Gruber, Law Office of Brian K. Gruber

Marge Guldán and Rosemary Kitzinger, Bright Futures, LLC

Beth Ann Hancock, Charting the Course, LLC

Nicole Joseph and Kate Raab, Law Offices of Nicole Joseph

Ande Kolp, The Arc Maryland

Mallory Legg, Maureen van Stone, Tyler Cochran, Project HEAL at Kennedy
Krieger Institute

Leslie Seid Margolis, Disability Rights Maryland, Co-chairperson

Mark B. Martin, Law Offices of Mark B. Martin

Ellen O'Neill, Atlantic Seaboard Dyslexia Education Center

Ronza Othman, National Federation of the Blind of Maryland/Maryland Organization of Parents
of Blind Children

Maria Ott, Attorney

Rebecca Rienzi, Pathfinders for Autism

Jaime E. Seaton, BGS Law

Kelly Spanoghe, Education Consultant

Ronnetta Stanley, M.Ed., Loud Voices Together

Wayne Steedman, Steedman Law Group, LLC

Liz Zogby, Maryland Down Syndrome Advocacy Coalition

Additionally, the Maryland Education Coalition also signs on to this testimony.