



SB 208: Human Services - Maryland Assistive Technology Program - Establishment

Testimony of the Maryland Independent Living Network

SUPPORT

Senate Finance Committee, January 29, 2025

The Maryland Independent Living Network is a coalition of the Maryland Statewide Independent Living Council and the seven Maryland-based Centers for Independent Living (CIL). CILs are created by federal law. CILs work to enhance the civil rights and quality of services for people with disabilities. There are seven CILs located throughout Maryland, operated by and for people with disabilities. CILs provide Information and Referral, Advocacy, Peer Support, Independent Living Skills training, and Transition Services to individuals with disabilities in their communities.

The Independent Living Network submits this written testimony in **support** of SB 208.

SB 208 codifies the federally funded Maryland Technology Assistance Program (MDTAP) into statute as the Maryland Assistive Technology Program in the Department of Disabilities (MDOD). The bill also expands the provision of assistive technology and addresses resources to aid the expansion of the program.

Assistive technology is a broad term for assistive products, related systems and related services that help individuals with disabilities and older individuals maintain or improve their independence and functioning related to communication, hearing, mobility, self-care, cognition, and vision. Assistive technology ensures that individuals with disabilities can focus on their health, well-being, as well as inclusion and participation in the community of their choice.

Assistive technology products can be physical products such as wheelchairs, glasses, prosthetic limbs, white canes, and hearing aids but also include digital solutions such as speech recognition or time management software and captioning. Furthermore, most individuals with disabilities and older individuals who use assistive technology typically use more than one product and/or service; accordingly, appropriate and individualized assistive technology makes integrated services important.

Codifying the existing program as the Maryland Assistive Technology Program ensures that eligible Marylanders with disabilities have access to the assistive technology that allows them to communicate and live independently in the communities of their choice.

The Maryland Independent Living Network appreciates the consideration of these comments.

The Maryland Independent Living Network strongly **supports** SB 208 and urges a **favorable** report.

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