



DATE: January 29, 2025

BILL: SB0208 – Human Services – Maryland Assistive Technology Program - Establishment

COMMITTEE: Finance

POSITION: Favorable

Dear Chair Beidle,

The Maryland Department of Disabilities (MDOD) is pleased to submit this letter in support of SB0208 Human Services – Maryland Assistive Technology Program – Establishment.

This legislation formally recognizes the Maryland Department of Disabilities' Assistive Technology Program (MDTAP). MDTAP was formed in 1989 to implement federal grant activities related to assistive technology for people with disabilities. The grant was most recently reauthorized in 2022 under the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Assistive Technology Act (Pub. L. 117-263, § 5401\_ *et. seq.*, referred to in this document as the "AT Act").

Assistive technology (AT) is critical to helping children and adults with disabilities obtain education, maintain employment, and live safely at home. MDTAP maintains AT lending libraries; provides AT demonstrations and trainings; helps individuals locate used no- or low-cost devices; and operates a low-interest financial loan program to help individuals purchase new devices. MDTAP's services are available for free statewide and can be accessed by any Marylander with a disability, including those who cannot currently receive (or are ineligible to receive) services from other agencies such as DORS or DDA. MDTAP also provides information and training to families, educators, and others who support people with disabilities.

MDTAP receives 100% of its funding from a formula-funded federal grant, which has increased by approximately \$15,000 per year. This has not kept pace with rising personnel and technology costs. MDTAP is seeking alternative ways to sustain and grow its program without requesting a State appropriation; this legislation presents one such alternative.

Once codified, MDTAP will be able to perform AT activities beyond those specified in the federal grant, such as AT evaluations and customized device training. The legislation also creates a special fund for the program to allow it to collect reasonable fees for the new AT activities it will perform. MDTAP will continue to offer its AT Act services free of charge. Performing additional services on a fee-for-service basis would allow MDTAP to offset personnel costs, which would allow increased investment in the services it offers for free.

We request a favorable report on this legislation. Thank you for your support of MDTAP and the thousands of Marylanders with disabilities who continue to benefit from its services.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Carol A. Beatty".

Carol A. Beatty, Secretary