

**FINANCE COMMITTEE**  
**SENATE BILL 208: Human Services - Maryland Assistive Technology Program - Establishment**  
**January 29, 2025**  
**Position: Support**

Disability Rights Maryland (DRM), Maryland's federally mandated Protection & Advocacy agency, is dedicated to advancing the civil rights of people with disabilities. DRM is pleased to submit this testimony in strong support of Senate Bill 208, which aims to establish the Maryland Assistive Technology Program (MDATP) within the Maryland Department of Disabilities.

This bill seeks to codify the Maryland Assistive Technology Program (MDATP) in state law, enabling it to expand its services to include fee-based offerings such as assessments, customized training, and digital accessibility evaluations. These enhanced services will help to address critical gaps in the state's assistive technology (AT) resources while fostering the MDATP's long-term sustainability. By advancing SB 208, Maryland reaffirms its commitment to increasing access to AT devices and services, empowering individuals with disabilities to achieve greater independence and actively participate in their communities.

AT empowers people with disabilities to enhance their ability to manage daily living, work, education, communication, and recreation. Through the MDATP's statewide AT lending libraries, Marylanders can access and borrow equipment such as alternative and augmentative communication devices, reading machines, assistive listening devices, environmental controls, and adaptive games. This flexibility minimizes financial risks and supports informed decision-making by allowing individuals to try equipment before committing to a purchase. Once they identify what works best, they can pursue funding through insurance, choose to purchase the item independently, or even obtain the item through a re-use center free of charge.

Securing AT through public or private insurance can be an arduous process, often requiring individuals to navigate complex approval systems and pursue multiple appeals to obtain even basic equipment. The MDATP serves as a vital resource for those unable to access the AT they need through insurance, whether due to coverage denials or the need for specialized devices that fall outside the scope of medical coverage. Additionally, the MDATP provides critical support for uninsured individuals who would otherwise have no access to these essential tools. By increasing funding and solidifying the MDATP as a permanent program, this legislation ensures equitable access to the AT devices and services that empower individuals with disabilities to thrive.

At DRM one of our primary goals is to improve access to AT for Marylanders with disabilities. Each year, we support numerous clients in obtaining the AT they need to enhance their independence and fully participate in their communities. Unfortunately, there remains a significant lack of affordable AT options for low- and middle-income individuals with disabilities in Maryland. To bridge this gap, DRM frequently refers clients to the MDATP for essential services such as access to the re-use program, AT counseling, and borrowing equipment to find the right fit. It is crucial to nurture and expand programs like the MDATP to ensure that Marylanders with disabilities are not left behind in accessing these critical resources.

Notably, this bill establishes the Assistive Technology Services Fund to sustainably finance essential services such as training, digital accessibility evaluations, and remediation. As vital aspects of daily life—such as government programs, employment, and education—continue to shift online, it is imperative that all Marylanders, including those with disabilities, are included in these digital spaces. By supporting this fund, Maryland reaffirms its commitment to creating a more accessible and equitable digital environment for everyone.

DRM is also proud to support this bill as the MDATP is designed to prioritize underrepresented populations, ensuring that all Marylanders—regardless of background or resources—have access to assistive technology. By investing in AT, Maryland will empower individuals with disabilities to live more independently, engage fully in their communities, and achieve greater equity and inclusion across all aspects of life.

DRM strongly supports Senate Bill 208 and respectfully urges the committee to issue a favorable report on this critical legislation. Should you have any questions or require additional information, please do not hesitate to contact me. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Gabriel Rubinstein  
Managing Attorney  
Disability Rights Maryland  
[GabrielR@DisabilityRightsMD.org](mailto:GabrielR@DisabilityRightsMD.org)  
443-692-2483